TERROR OR TREASURE? AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF TELECOMMUTERS' ASSIMILATION IN THE WORKPLACE

by

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ABSTRACT

Despite growing in numbers, telecommuting has received mixed reactions from organizations and scholars who have conducted research on this topic. The purpose of this study was to shed light on the understudied topic of assimilation in telecommuting environments, to see if existing understandings of assimilation are sufficiently rich to explain the complex phenomenon of telecommuting. Eighty-seven telecommuters and 215 nontelecommuters participated in an online survey, comprising descriptive demographic questions and items from the revised Organizational Assimilation Index. Noteworthy findings are: telecommuters are surprisingly more acculturated, negotiate their roles more and report higher familiarity with supervisors and recognition than nontelecommuters; male telecommuters are more acculturated than female nontelecommuters, and female telecommuters are more acculturated than both male and female nontelecommuters; various patterns and practices of communication influence acculturation, involvement, job competency and role negotiation positively in telecommuters; and finally, perceiving coworkers' benefits to be more attractive results in higher acculturation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition, but lower role negotiation, in telecommuters. Implications of these findings are discussed, along with limitations and recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A move by Yahoo to eliminate remote work early last year has garnered much media attention (Goldsmith, 2013). It has rekindled the debate regarding the benefits and costs of telecommuting to employees and organizations. The memo announcing the move cites "the need to be one Yahoo" (Swisher, 2013) as the main reason for the change in the work from home policy. It also asserts that speed and quality of performance are "sacrificed" when employees telecommute. Interestingly enough, research shows that such attributes are indicative of employees who do not identify with the organization, and who have not adopted the culture and values of the organization.

Employees that feel detached from their organizations are typically demotivated and are not driven to perform; conversely, employees who feel a connection to their jobs strive to meet the goals set by their employers. Researchers have found that feeling assimilated with the organization influences work attitudes and behaviors positively, by raising levels of motivation, enhancing job performance and satisfaction and promoting organizationally-appropriate decisions, which is likely to result in retention (Cheney, 1983; Scott, Corman & Cheney, 1998). Employee satisfaction and retention have implications for productivity, efficiency, as well as profit for an organization.

This is where organizational socialization comes in, which aims to help (new) employees integrate into the organization. Organizational socialization has been of interest to researchers for over 3 decades now, stemming from the pioneer work of Van Maanen and Schein (1979) and Jablin (1982) (qtd. in Kramer & Miller, 1999). Much knowledge has been produced regarding effective newcomer socialization (Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). It has been reviewed in a range of fields: corporate settings (Gallagher & Sias, 2009; Hart, 2012), academic settings (Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998; Newman, 1974; Sallee, 2011) and volunteer organizations (Kramer, 2011). Research shows that employees rely on a number of sources, apart from formal training, for obtaining information about their new roles and the organization. Yet, what happens when these traditional sources of information, including administration, supervisors and coworkers are absent or mediated—such as in dispersed work environments, as is the case with teleworking? Or, like in the case of Yahoo, employees are performing at levels lower than the company expects?

In 2012, 23% of employed Americans reported that on the days when they worked, they did some or all of their work from home (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). With the percentage of telecommuters in the US rising by 73% between 2005 and 2011, while the actual workforce only grew by 4.3% (Global Workplace Analytics, 2013), it is evident that firms are adopting more flexible policies to enable their employees to work from home. Ensuring that telecommuters feel integrated into the organization, then, becomes a priority for managers, and this can be achieved through organizational socialization efforts.

Before moving on to a more detailed discussion highlighting the necessity for research on telecommuting and assimilation, conceptualizations of key terms and concepts are provided.

Definitions: Socialization and assimilation

Organizational socialization deals with the process through which new employees become organizational members (Bullis, 1993). Many perceive it to be complete after an orientation program; however, socialization is a dynamic and ongoing process.

One definition of organizational socialization is put forward by Taormina (1997), who conceptualizes organizational socialization as organizational culture, training, interpersonal relations and future prospects. Another interpretation of the term explains it to be "the processes by which individuals become integrated into the culture of an organization" (Jablin, 2001, qtd in Myers & Oetzel, 2003).

As awareness of the importance of organizational socialization has increased over time, its core concept has evolved as well. Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein and Gardner (1994) explain how the definition of organizational socialization has changed from "a general description of 'learning the ropes'" to become a more comprehensive concept defined as "the primary process by which people adapt to new jobs and organizational roles." This broader expression incorporates organizational identity, values, expected responsibilities, and protocols for interacting with coworkers and supervisors.

Organizational socialization and assimilation have been studied on two levels, contend Chao et al. (1994). The first is concerned with understanding the

various phases new employees experience as they become more accustomed to their role in the organization. The second level, they state, is centered on the knowledge-acquisition and feedback-seeking behaviors of new employees.

Socialization is often referred to as assimilation. Myers (2009) offers a differentiation of the terms organizational socialization and organizational assimilation. “Organizational socialization is the process by which newcomers learn how to fulfill their roles, are introduced to others, and become familiar with the policies and norms of the organization,” she explains. Organizational assimilation entails “[becoming] familiar with the culture and [assuming] roles as participating members of the organization” (Myers, 2009). This indicates that assimilation is considered to be a desirable outcome of socialization. Alternately, assimilation can be defined as “those ongoing behavioral and cognitive processes by which individuals join, become integrated into, and exit organizations” (Jablin & Krone, 1987, qtd. in Miller, 2015), or “conceived as a role-making-role-adjustment process” (Newman, 1974). These conceptualizations hint that there is a slight difference and a causal relationship between organizational socialization and organizational assimilation. This study focuses primarily on assimilation. Other terms for this process are onboarding, induction and aligning (Jones, 2008), organizational membership and organizational citizenship.

For a comprehensive understanding of assimilation, it is worth looking at both socialization and assimilation in greater detail. Organizational socialization has been broken down into various constituent constructs. Chao et al. (1994), for instance, maintain that socialization comprises political knowledge, language, performance proficiency, organizational goals and value knowledge and history

(qtd. in Hart, 2012). Myers and Oetzel (2003) consider familiarity with others, acculturation, recognition, involvement, job competency and adaptation and role negotiation to be the six dimensions that result in organizational assimilation. They developed the Organizational Assimilation Index (OAI) to measure these assimilation dimensions. Gailliard, Myers and Seibold (2010) build on Myers and Oetzel's index and break the first dimension, familiarity with others, into familiarity with coworkers and familiarity with supervisors.

Definitions: Telecommuting

Distributed work environments have become increasingly popular over the years, supported by technological advances and our dependence on digital connectedness. The practice started out in the 1980s with freelancers using email to offer services to set up their businesses to "supply larger firms with expertise that could be accessed as required" ("Strategic Direction"). Sophisticated technology has brought telecommuting a long way from its humble beginnings, and today, its applications are practically endless. Dispersed work environments come in many different forms. Remote work, virtual work, work-from-home, e-work, homeworking, telecommuting and teleworking are often used interchangeably to describe flexible employment conditions. However, these terms have slightly distinct meanings.

Telecommuting is difficult to define in clear terms, because it can mean both regular e-work as well as unpaid overtime work from home (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson & Andrey, 2013). According to Nilles (1994), teleworking is a broad reference to "any form of substitution of information technologies (such as

telecommunications and computers) for work-related travels" (p. xix). This definition includes remote work, virtual work, homework and telecommuting. Remote work is "a work arrangement in which the employee resides and works at a location beyond the local commuting area of the employing organization's worksite … [it] describe[s] a full-time telework arrangement" ("Essentials of Telework"). When this work is done exclusively from the home, it is known as homeworking or work-at-home (ILO). Telecommuting, a subset of teleworking, is defined as "moving the work to the workers instead of moving the workers to the work" (Nilles, 1994, p. xix). Baruch (2000) mentions three aspects of telecommuting: first, it should be partially or fully independent from the employer's physical location; second, it should make use of information technology; and lastly, it should have an organizational form and communication link to the organization.

For the purposes of this study, telecommuting has been conceptualized as conducting one's regular job without having to be physically present at the workplace. In this study, teleworking, telecommuting and remote employment are used interchangeably to describe any employment situation where employees perform at least part of their job responsibilities away from their employers' physical location (Fay & Kline, 2011; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Thatcher & Zhu, 2006). Teleworking can vary in frequency from less than 20% of total employment, known as occasional telecommuting, to over 90%, called permanent telecommuting (Taskin & Bridoux, 2010). To be relevant to this study, participants had to be employed at least 20 hours a week. In order to be considered a telecommuter, participants had to work remotely at least 20% of the

time.

The purpose of this study

The census numbers indicate that telecommuting is on the rise and gaining widespread popularity. However, many organizations are still reluctant to offer flexible employment opportunities (Peters, Tijdens & Wetzels, 2004). Telecommuters are often perceived as producing lower quality work and being less motivated and less productive than collocated employees, especially in the event of lower controls over task completion and monitoring. However, research shows that positive assimilation can alleviate such issues and strengthen a telecommuter's ties to the organization. Offering telecommuting options and recruiting telecommuters has massive benefits not just for the employees, but also the organization and society in general (Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of the benefits of telecommuting). There is also an added benefit of being able to tap into previously neglected sections of the labor market, such as students, stay-at-home parents and retirees ("Strategic Direction").

The purpose of this study is to explore telecommuting, communication and assimilation to begin to understand how, if at all, telecommuting may necessitate reconsidering existing understandings of assimilation. Any potent findings would be vital for helping telecommuters and employers develop relationships and spaces for satisfying, mutually beneficial work to get done.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Telecommuting has been studied broadly and in diverse fields. It has been researched from an environmental perspective (Roth, Rhodes & Ponoum, 2008; Williams, 2003), in psychology (Golden, Veiga & Simsek, 2006; Hill, Erickson, Holmes & Ferris, 2010) and in business (Birschel, 2002; Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson & Andrey, 2013). Much of this research focuses on the management of telecommuters and the choice of workers to telecommute (Watson-Manheim, Piramuthu & Narasimhan, 2000). In the field of communication, telecommuting has been studied in relation to work-life balance, identity and isolation, job satisfaction and performance (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004; Thatcher & Zhu, 2006). While there are some studies (Dimitrova, 2003; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Thatcher & Zhu, 2006) examining socialization in telecommuters, its relevance and relation to assimilation has not been thoroughly explored.

There have been few studies interpreting the socialization patterns of teleworkers. Socialization of telecommuting employees is important to investigate, because research has found that there is a relationship between a sense of identification with and commitment to an organization (Tompkins, 2005). When employees do not meet their coworkers regularly and have limited

opportunities for interaction, it is possible that they feel isolated from the work environment, detached from the work itself and demotivated; this can impact their morale, satisfaction and contributions to their organizations. Bullis (1993) describes socialization as being "central to role taking, newcomer acculturation, employee attitudes and behaviors and the shaping of newcomers' identities," and this underscores the need for investigating and interpreting socialization patterns in telecommuters. Investing in socialization efforts is also beneficial to organizations because it is related to employee and organizational success (Bullis, 1993), enhances employee effectiveness and helps maintain the organization's culture and operations (Myers, 2009).

In this chapter, I first describe the popular themes found in telecommuting research. Then, I point out the dearth of literature addressing socialization and assimilation in telecommuters. Next, I review research on telecommuters' motivation, telecommuters' communication challenges and the role of perceived benefits to highlight the potential for research. I also include a brief review of findings of assimilation studies in terms of gender and managerial status. I present the research questions and hypotheses for the present study through a discussion of these themes and the necessity for further research.

Telecommuting: Popular themes

Telecommuting has received some attention from scholars in recent years. Popular themes that emerge in telecommuting literature most relevant to the field of communication are related to work-life balance, organizational identity and job satisfaction. This section is devoted to reviewing prominent findings in

each of these areas, to present a multifaceted view of the telecommuting phenomenon.

When it comes to work-family balance in telecommuters, there is an ongoing scholarly debate about its beneficial or detrimental effects. Some studies have found that telecommuting can lead to greater integration between employees' roles at work and at home (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004). Others show that the conflict is more pronounced due to the permeability of the work and family boundaries (Raghuram & Wiesenfeld, 2004; Standen et al., 1999). Fonner and Stache (2012) investigated this dynamic and discovered that while some try to merge the two spheres of their lives, most telecommuters tend to segment work from home environments. They report that as telecommuters struggle with the paradox of flexibility and structure, they develop coping mechanisms in the form of cues that facilitate role transition. Time, space, technology and communication are used as strategies to help telecommuters balance their work and private lives. Some studies have attempted to resolve the inconsistencies, and found that telecommuting intensity and duration lower work-family conflict (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Research also found that work-life conflict is influenced by contextual factors like job autonomy, scheduling flexibility and household size. Golden and colleagues report that longer duration of telecommuting lowers work-to family conflict, but increases family-to-work conflict (Golden, Veiga & Simsek, 2006).

Another area of interest is organizational identity in telecommuters. Organizational identity encompasses "the central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other organizations" (Whetten, 2006).

Ashforth and Mael (1996) describe the identity of an organization as synonymous with its character, which is "a product of a company's values, beliefs and norms" (p. 24). These values, beliefs and norms are communicated to employees during the socialization process, which makes a review of existing literature on telecommuters' identification with their organizations, or lack thereof, highly relevant.

Remote working conditions, by default, increase the challenges of developing identification with and commitment towards an organization. According to Rock and Pratt (2002), telecommuting lowers the salience of work identity in employees with high organizational identification. Thatcher and Zhu (2006) posit that reduced opportunities for face to face interaction negatively impact the development of an organizational identity in telecommuters. Even though teleworkers negotiate their identities through a "virtual presence," the technology-mediated communication may trigger a sense of changed relationships and changed identities (Ballard & Gossett, 2007, p.300).

Constant communication enabled by technology also gives rise to the possibility of unplanned interruptions. Telecommuters' organizational identification is negatively impacted due to stressful interruptions caused by constant communication with coworkers and supervisors, which they feel contradicts their organizational expectations (Fonner & Roloff, 2012). Finally, the temporal and spatial distance between regular workers and remote workers means there is less scope for teleworkers to participate in organizational routines, which are sources of "connection and understanding" (DeSanctis & Monge, 1998). Thus, teleworkers have less exposure to the structures and guidelines that

contribute to the development of individual and collective identities (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram & Garud, 2001).

Research on job satisfaction among telecommuters exposes contrasting findings. Telecommuters are generally reported to be very content with their employment. A number of researchers have found job satisfaction to be very high in telecommuters (Belanger, 1998; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Quite a few reasons are cited that enhance job satisfaction in telecommuters, including perceived autonomy in adjusting tasks (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), reduced stress from work-related interruptions (Fonner & Roloff, 2012), more control over interactions with managers and coworkers (Dubrin, 1991; Fonner & Roloff, 2012) and ability to participate in family roles (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007; Reinsch, 1997). On the other hand, studies have found that job satisfaction decreases with feelings of isolation. Lack of informal communication and interactions with supervisors and coworkers has been found to impact job satisfaction negatively (Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Pool, 1990, as qtd, in Golden & Veiga, 2005). Golden and Veiga (2005) attempt to resolve these contradictory findings, and propose that telecommuting and job satisfaction do not have a simple linear relationship. Instead, they suggest that job satisfaction initially increases with an increase in telecommuting; however, after a certain point, satisfaction drops at higher levels of telecommuting. They also found that task interdependence and job discretion moderated this relationship: telecommuters with low levels of task interdependence and/or high levels of job discretion tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction, regardless of their extent of telecommuting.

While all of these aspects of work-life balance, identity and job satisfaction are crucial in understanding telecommuting and have strong implications for assimilation, there are still gaps in understanding the assimilation of telecommuters. Fritz, Narasimhan and Rhee (1998) point out the dearth of literature addressing factors like socialization and communication among individuals in distributed work environments. The next section details research that has specifically investigated socialization and assimilation in telecommuters and highlights the potential for more research.

Telecommuters and assimilation

The literature on telecommuting research paints a grim picture of employees' socialization and assimilation in telecommuting environments. Bartel, Wrzeniewski and Wiesenfeld (2007), for instance, found that remoteness is associated with weaker organizational identification among new hires. New recruits might be new members on a team, but whether they claim membership or not is worth investigating further. Despite their membership in organizations, telecommuters may perceive their employment to be transient (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), which poses a threat to their assimilation. Because telecommuting "weakens transmission and maintenance of the organizational culture" (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006), it is often accompanied by "the loss of the collaborative spirit" (Dimitrova, 2003). This leads some researchers to describe telecommuting as detrimental to organizational performance. They perceive nontraditional work to be solely a fee-based transaction, involving no loyalty, which "renders the employee-organization relationship morally and emotionally

bankrupt" (Mirvis & Hall, 1996; Tsui, Pearce, Porter & Hite, 1995, as qtd. in Thatcher & Zhu, 2006). Further, Wiesenfeld and colleagues (1999) have found telecommuters to "operate autonomously, without consideration for the organization" (qtd. in Thatcher & Zhu, 2006).

These findings are worrisome, especially with the exponential growth of the popularity of telecommuting in recent years, and beg further investigation of telecommuters' assimilation. Thus follows the first research question:

- *Research Question 1*: How do telecommuters score on the Organizational Assimilation Index? How does this compare to nontelecommuters?

Reexamining telecommuting

A review of existing literature reveals various reasons for why people telecommute. One study identifies gendered reasons for telecommuting: women tend to telecommute for domestic and family reasons like childcare, while men are more likely to telecommute for work-related and individual reasons, such as avoiding office politics (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). Another study shows that contemporary employees seek four interdependent types of flexibility: time, space, evaluation and compensation (Cowan & Hoffman, 2007).

Although telecommuting was "originally proposed as a creative way to save energy and increase productivity" (Pearlson & Saunders, 2001), it has grown to incorporate various other motivations. Reinsch (1997) found that the elimination of a daily commute, availability for children and the flexibility in work hours, and permitting a more active role in family life, were the three main reasons for telecommuting. Kurland and Cooper (2002)'s findings build on these

reasons; they mention a reduction in a lengthy commute, a decrease in work-related stress, uninterrupted focus and the ability to work longer hours more comfortably to be the deciding factors for telecommuters. Dimitrova (2003) acknowledges that collapsing rigid working hours has a contradictory effect, because while telecommuters gained more discretion over their work hours, they were not protected from overtime. In any case, her findings reflect circumstances unique to telecommuters. She cites family responsibilities, personal commitments and preferences as the main reason why employees work remotely. In an attempt to further understand employees' motivations for telecommuting, the following research question was posed:

- *Research Question 2a*: Why do telecommuters telecommute?

Also of interest is whether telecommuters are required to go into the workplace at all. Researchers have often assumed that work entails physically going to a workplace. This is especially the case with most research on socialization and assimilation. It is important to understand to what extent telecommuting continues to assume a relationship with a physical work location. This will provide a clearer picture of the life of telecommuters and how their assimilation is influenced.

- *Research Question 2b*: Do telecommuters need to physically go into their workplaces at all? If so, why?

Communication channels and frequency

Assimilation has been described as an interactive communicative process (Jablin, 1982, as qtd. in Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Communication is an integral

component of assimilation, in terms of both the quality and the quantity (frequency) of communication.

In telecommuting environments, communication is often seen as a challenge. By altering the traditional patterns of communication, telecommuting complicates social and task dynamics, making it difficult for managers to ensure telecommuters are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities towards the organization (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006). Kurland and Cooper (2002) note that cohesion-fostering conditions, such as shared gathering areas and proximal work stations that foster informal face-to-face interactions (Sundstrom, de Meuse & Futrell, 1990, qtd, in Kurland & Cooper, 2002), are often absent in telecommuting environments.

In their examination of paradoxes surrounding telecommuting, and strategies for resolving them, Pearlson and Saunders (2001) found that one of the factors determining the success of telecommuting is frequent and multiple sources of communication. In his study of the relationship quality between telecommuters and their managers, Reinsch (1997) noted a pattern in the channels telecommuters used to communicate with their managers and coworkers. Telephone and fax machines were used most frequently, but respondents also mentioned using email, voicemail, speaker telephones, courier services, pagers and video conferencing. These participants also noted a need for communication channels with “more speed or quicker responses” (p. 353). It can be assumed that in the 17 years since this study was conducted, technology has progressed to provide more options with more immediate message exchange features. The channels of communication used by telecommuters today are

expected to be different from those reported by Reinsch (1997), and thus the following research question is posed:

- *Research Question 3a*: How do telecommuters communicate with their supervisors and coworkers?

Telecommuting is subject to the connectivity paradox (Leonardi, Treem & Jackson, 2010), which suggests that while connectivity enables employees to overcome distance and work remotely, it oftentimes provides too much connectivity and opportunities for distraction, countering the benefits of telecommuting altogether. Fonner and Roloff (2012) examine the impact of the connectivity paradox in relation to teleworkers' communication media use. They conclude that the use of all types of communication media other than the telephone increases teleworkers' stress from interruptions. Telecommuters perceive this negatively because the interruptions may create time pressure and difficulty with managing the workload. It can be speculated, then, that this connectivity paradox may be related to assimilation as well. On one hand, this connection should increase assimilation, while on the other hand, it may also negatively affect assimilation through stress and distraction discussed in the literature. Moreover, connectivity may enhance oversight that may reduce autonomy. This leads to a research question examining the impact and outcomes of frequency and channels of communication:

- *Research Question 3b*: Do the channels used and frequency of communication predict assimilation in telecommuters?

Research has noted varying degrees of relationship changes between telecommuters and their manager and coworkers. One study found that 90% of

the telecommuters and supervisors in their sample reported that telecommuting had not affected their work relationships (Klayton, 1994, as qtd. in Reinsch, 1997). Another researcher suggests that transitioning to telecommuting may lead to a deterioration in the relationship quality between telecommuters and their managers, especially in terms of trust (Gabarro, 1990, as qtd. in Reinsch, 1997). Reinsch (1997) found that telecommuters' relationship with their manager weakened over time, but that the relationship quality increased slightly when the duration of telecommuting was about a year. Some studies have also found that the relationship between telecommuters and their coworkers suffers due to telecommuting (Huws, Korte & Robinson, 1990, as qtd. in Reinsch, 1997).

Fay and Kline (2011) report that when encouraged by managers, informal communication (nonwork related communication for the purpose of socializing, for instance) may help telecommuters develop their relationships with their coworkers. They also posit that complaining offers a platform for telecommuters to "solidify membership claim to the organization" (p. 157) by clarifying and negotiating work roles. Thus, increased interaction has implications for role negotiation when telecommuters have a good relationship with their coworkers. This leads to the following hypotheses:

- *Hypothesis 1*: Telecommuters who communicate with their coworkers (and supervisors) frequently and use multiple channels are more familiar with their coworkers (and supervisors).
- *Hypothesis 2*: Increased interaction (frequency of communication with supervisors and coworkers) predicts higher role negotiation.

Benefits

Compensation packages and benefits play a key role in an employee's satisfaction with their jobs. In a search of the literature on assimilation and telecommuting with benefits, it became apparent that researchers often consider flextime and telecommuting to be organizational benefits (Lapierre & Allen, 2006). To our knowledge, neither actual nor perceived benefits have been studied in telecommuting populations. Perceived benefits are expected to make a difference in employment experiences, and thus I pose the next research question to test for the impact of perceived benefits on telecommuters' assimilation.

- *Research Question 4*: Do perceived benefits predict assimilation in telecommuters?

Other factors that may affect assimilation

There appear to be inconsistencies in the existing literature about the role of gender on the assimilation of telecommuters. According to Dimitrova (2003), "temporal flexibility is usually associated with gender differences." Reinsch's (1997) finding of female telecommuters reporting lower levels of trust in their managers is a testament to that. However, empirical research conducted by Dimitrova (2003) and Baruch (2000) failed to identify gender differences in telecommuting professionals. In an investigation of assimilation as a multidimensional, complex construct, Gailliard, Myers and Seibold (2010) found that women feel more acculturated in an organization, and men negotiate their roles better. It is not yet known if this finding holds true in telecommuters using the same OAI. This leads to the following research question:

- *Research Question 5*: Is there a difference in the assimilation of men and women depending on telecommuting status?

It has been found that employees who participate in the selection and socialization of new hires benefit from such activities, and strengthen their own sense of belonging and inclusion in the organization (Bartel, Wrzeniewski & Wiesenfeld, 2007; Sutton & Louis, 1987). Oftentimes, managers and supervisors play an active and integral role in recruiting and socializing their team members. This indicates that it is likely that managers are more assimilated than nonmanagers. Consistent with this proposition, in developing the OAI, Gailliard, Myers and Seibold (2010) found that managers tend to be more familiar with supervisors and coworkers, and more comfortable with their responsibilities than nonmanagers. They also report that those who were employed in their current roles for less than 2 years and more than 10 years are more familiar with supervisors and coworkers and more competent in their jobs. These findings lead to two hypotheses to examine the influence of managerial status and tenure on assimilation processes in telecommuting environments:

- *Hypothesis 3*: Both telecommuting and nontelecommuting managers will be more assimilated than nonmanagers.
- *Hypothesis 4*: Tenure predicts assimilation in telecommuters and non-telecommuters.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Procedure

With Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, a short email (Appendix A) explaining the purpose of this study was sent out to over 350 individuals, along with a request to forward the email to their coworkers and friends. The email stated who was conducting the research (along with their contact information) and why, and outlined the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Individuals over the age of 18, who are employed for a minimum of 20 hours a week, were asked to respond to a short survey. It was specified that independent contractors with no affiliation to a specific organization were not relevant to the study. The email included a hyperlink to the electronic survey, with a request for participation and distribution of the link among others meeting the criteria.

Various telework companies and organizations were also contacted. The organizations were obtained from Google searches of phrases including "telecommuting companies," "organizations with remote work options," "telecommuting jobs Utah" and so on. It was a challenge to find the relevant contact person in larger organizations with large numbers of telecommuters. Some organizations that considered distributing the survey mentioned they needed to obtain approval from the appropriate managers. The survey was also

promoted on various relevant forums online (Linkedin). Social media (Facebook) and personal communication were also used to try and obtain as large a sample as possible.

The email (or message) contained a link to a two-part questionnaire (Appendix B) on Qualtrics. Qualtrics was used for ease of use, link distribution and data collection. Clicking on the link took participants to the cover page of the survey, which mirrored the contents of the email, highlighted the purpose of the study and reminded them that participation was completely voluntary and that their responses would be anonymous and confidential. The bottom of the page had a "continue" button, which they were prompted to click on if they wished to proceed with the survey. This was treated as their expressed consent. Instructions were provided to help them navigate the various types of questions (choosing the best option, typing in their responses, rating statements on a Likert-type scale). In case participants worked for multiple employers, they were asked to respond to the remaining questions based on their employment experiences for any one organization. At the end of their participation, respondents were prompted to submit their responses and were thanked for their time and participation.

When the desired number of participants was reached, the data were downloaded to SPSS and cleaned. Various irrelevant columns generated by Qualtrics automatically were deleted, and appropriate titles were assigned to the columns. Some columns were recoded to facilitate data analysis (Results).

Participants

A combination of convenience and snowball sampling was used to contact participants for two groups: telecommuters, who work remotely for at least 20% of their working hours, and onsite employees (also referred to as nontelecommuters or traditional employees), who work primarily from an office.

At least 100 respondents were required in each group for statistical power so that the research and results would be meaningful. The initial data collection efforts yielded a large number of traditional employees, but very few telecommuters. After 3 months of collecting data and waiting for more telecommuters, an IRB amendment was submitted to request approval for contacting various corporations encouraging flexible employment and other telework organizations. The number of telecommuters increased gradually.

There was a total of 339 completed responses. Of these, 45.9% of the participants were male (n = 155), 54.1% were female (n = 183). The participants were between 19 and 66 years of age (m = 30.44, SD = 8.734). Seven respondents did not reveal their age, and 1 who indicated they were 14 years old was discarded from the dataset, since the participation criteria specified respondents must be at least 18 years old to participate. There were 36.6% (n = 124) of participants that indicated they telecommuted at least some of the time and 63.4% (n = 215) that were traditional employees. Out of those who indicated they telecommute at least some of the time, 11% (n = 37) telecommute less than 20% of their weekly hours. Twenty-five and seven-tenths percent (n = 87) of respondents telecommute at least 20% of the time, with 29 respondents (8.6%) working remotely all the time. This means that, according to my definitions, there were 215 traditional

employees and 87 telecommuters.

In the telecommuter population, 69.8% (n = 60) were female and 30.2% (n = 26) were male. The ages ranged from 19 and 66, with a mean of 33.88 years (SD = 10.258). The traditional employees were almost evenly divided between women and men; there were 108 females (50.2%) and 107 males (49.8%). Ages ranged from 19 to 62 (m = 28.85, SD = 7.579). While the sample of traditional employees in this survey is somewhat representative of the population, according to one article, the telecommuter population is not. Noonan and Glass (2012), working with data from 1997 and 2004, report a probability sample of nontelecommuters comprising 55% male and 45% female, and of telecommuters consisting of 53% male and 47% female.

The remaining 37 respondents did not match the set criteria of telecommuting at least 20% of their weekly hours. Since this research aims to examine differences in telecommuters (who work at least 20% of their hours remotely) and nontelecommuters (who complete all their work in a central office), these 37 responses were categorized into a third group and were omitted from most major analyses.

Instrument design

The first part of the questionnaire dealt with basic relevant demographics including age, gender, job title, duration of employment, duration of working from remote locations (if any), whether they visit the office at all and why (if they work from remote locations at all) and whether they are in a supervisory position. In addition to these, the first section also asked for the participants' frequency

and primary modes of communication with supervisors and coworkers. Participants were also questioned about the benefits they received. They were asked to choose one of three options: whether their benefits were equal to their coworkers or more or less attractive than their coworkers' benefits.

The second section was Gaillard, Myers and Seibold's (2010) 24-item Organizational Assimilation Index (OAI). The OAI includes seven dimensions: familiarity with coworkers, familiarity with supervisors, acculturation, involvement, recognition, job competency, and adaptation and role negotiation. The confirmatory factor analysis of Gailliard et al. (2010) resulted in confirmation of the seven dimension index. The following is a short description of each of the seven dimensions in the OAI, along with the reliabilities reported by Gailliard et al. (2010).

- *Familiarity with coworkers* (α = .86): This involves a willingness to interact with and form good relationships with colleagues. The items included in this dimension are: "I consider my coworkers friends," "I feel comfortable talking to my coworkers" and "I feel like I know my coworkers pretty well."
- *Familiarity with supervisors* (α = .87): This involves a willingness to interact with and form good relationships with supervisors. The items in this category are: "I feel like I know my supervisor pretty well," "My supervisor sometimes discusses problems with me" and "My supervisor and I talk together often."
- *Acculturation* (α = .84): This deals with acquiring information about and familiarity with the organizational culture. Acculturation has four items in

the index: “I understand the standards of the organization,” “I think I have a good idea about how this organization operates,” “I know the values of my organization” and “I do not mind being asked to perform my work according to the organization’s standards.”

- *Recognition* (α = .95): Recognition is another way of feeling connected to the organization, and comes in the form of acknowledgements of one’s contributions. The items under recognition are: “My supervisor recognizes when I do a good job,” “My supervisor listens to my ideas,” “I think my supervisor values my opinions” and “I think my supervisor recognizes my value to the organization.”
- *Involvement* (α = .83): Feeling involved and engaged in the organization is another important aspect of assimilation. The survey measures this with the following statements: “I talk to my coworkers about how much I like it here,” “I volunteer for duties that benefit the organization” and “I talk about how much I enjoy my work.”
- *Job competency* (α = .79): One of the more obvious dimensions on the scale is job competency. Knowing what one is expected to do in one’s role is undoubtedly an indicator of how well assimilated they are. The items in job competency are: “I can do others’ jobs, if I am needed,” “I have figured out efficient ways to do my work,” “I think I’m an expert at what I do” and “I often show others how to perform our work.”
- *Role negotiation* (α = .80): This dimension deals with a compromise between the expectations of the employee as well as the expectations of the organization. Role negotiation is measured with the following items: “I

have helped to change the duties of my position," "I have changed some aspects of my position" and "I do this job a bit differently than my predecessor did."

Although the OAI was not developed for telecommuting populations, the literature on assimilation of telecommuters and the definitions of the dimensions suggest that all seven dimensions are relevant and applicable to telecommuters. Since the focus of this study is to examine the extent of organizational assimilation of telecommuters, this scale is appropriate.

The items under each dimension were reordered on the questionnaire to minimize respondents' learning bias (Choi & Pak, 2005). The items were measured on a 5 point Likert-type scale, where 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly disagree. This means that the lower the score, the higher or stronger the association with a particular item or dimension.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Performance on the Organizational Assimilation Index (OAI)

The first research question explores patterns in the assimilation of telecommuters, and compares them to those of traditional employees. The original OAI measures assimilation on seven dimensions, familiarity with supervisors, familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, recognition, involvement, role negotiation and job competency. A Principal Components Analysis with varimax rotation was done to test the validity of the instrument in this population.

The Principal Components Factor analysis revealed evidence of a six-factor structure instead of the expected seven-factor structure, and the rotated component matrix (Table 1) illustrates that familiarity with supervisor and recognition loaded on the same factor. These two dimensions were therefore merged into a dimension called combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition.

The criterion for determining the validity of each item in the OAI was twofold. First, the item needed to have a primary factor loading of at least .500, and in cases where there were multiple loadings, the subsequent loadings needed

Table 1: Principal components analysis with factor loadings

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
FamSuper1	.607			.394		
FamSuper2	.747					
FamSuper3	.647			.430		
FamCoworker1				.719		.381
FamCoworker2				.732		
FamCoworker3				.696		
Accult1		.754				
Accult2		.626	.322			
Accult3		.744				
Accult4	.308	.499				
Involv1						.779
Involv2		.559			.492	
Involv3	.302					.787
Recog1	.807					
Recog2	.780					
Recog3	.789					
Recog4	.777					
JobComp1			.485		.408	
JobComp2		.306	.681			
JobComp3			.784			
JobComp4			.503	.321	.391	
RoleNeg1			.451		.638	
RoleNeg2					.668	
RoleNeg3					.744	

to be at least .200 lower than the primary loading. Second, the item should not lower Chronbach's Alpha if it were to be deleted. Of the 24 items on the OAI, 19 items met the first requirement. The five items that did not meet the first requirement were item 4 for acculturation ("I do not mind being asked to perform my work according to the organization's standards"), item 2 for involvement ("I volunteer for duties that benefit the organization"), items 1 and 4 for job competency ("I can do others' jobs, if I am needed;" "I often show others how to perform our work") and item 1 for role negotiation ("I have helped to change the duties of my position"). The item statistics revealed that if item 4 for acculturation and item 2 for involvement were deleted, the reliabilities for acculturation and involvement would increase from $\alpha = .772$ to $\alpha = .788$ and from $\alpha = .699$ to $\alpha = .826$, respectively. Deleting the other three items would lower the reliabilities for job competency and role negotiation. Hence, the two items were omitted to create a more solid and reliable measure.

The reliabilities for the six factors are as follows: familiarity with coworkers, $\alpha = .746$; acculturation, $\alpha = .788$; involvement, $\alpha = .826$; job competency, $\alpha = .732$; role negotiation, $\alpha = .718$; and combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition, $\alpha = .886$.

T-tests

Because the dimensions of the OAI were not all moderately correlated, a MANOVA was inappropriate. Therefore, t-tests and ANCOVAs were used to explore differences between telecommuters and traditional employees.

A series of t-tests was carried out to determine the differences in

assimilation between telecommuters and traditional employees on the six dimensions of the OAI. A new data file was created with equal sample sizes and equal variances by drawing a random sample of traditional employee responses.

The t-test revealed that telecommuters (n = 82, m = 1.646, SD = .569) are more acculturated than nontelecommuters, (n = 83, m = 1.843, SD = .573); t (163) = -2.214, p = .028. Telecommuters (n = 82, m = 1.874, SD = .673) also score higher on familiarity with supervisors and recognition than their collocated counterparts, (n = 82, m = 2.115, SD = .695); t (162) = -2.252, p = .026. Table 2 summarizes the results.

ANCOVAs

A series of ANCOVAs were computed to further test the relationship between telecommuting and assimilation. While testing the effect of one dimension, the other dimensions were added to the model as covariates.
For the first ANCOVA, testing for a relationship between telecommuting and familiarity with coworkers, Levene's test showed heterogeneity of variances. Therefore, a new file was created with equal sample sizes. However, variances still showed heterogeneity. Familiarity with coworkers was then transformed into cosine, and another ANCOVA was computed. This time, Levene's test showed homogeneity of variances at p = .469, but this analysis showed no significant relationship.

The original data file was used for the rest of the analyses (unless mentioned otherwise). An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: telecommuter (yes, no); benefits (same benefits, my coworkers get more attractive benefits),

Table 2: The differences between telecommuters and nontelecommuters on the OAI

		N	Means	Standard Deviation	Significance Level
Familiarity with coworkers	Telecommuters	82	2.052	.825	.756
	Nontelecommuters	82	2.016	.668	
Acculturation	Telecommuters	82	1.646	.569	.028
	Nontelecommuters	83	1.843	.573	
Involvement	Telecommuters	82	2.378	.914	.228
	Nontelecommuters	83	2.530	.918	
Job Competency	Telecommuters	81	2.064	.664	.389
	Nontelecommuters	82	2.149	.583	
Role Negotiation	Telecommuters	80	2.162	.763	.424
	Nontelecommuters	83	2.253	.667	
Familiarity with supervisor and recognition	Telecommuters	82	1.874	.673	.026
	Nontelecommuters	82	2.115	.695	

covariate: familiarity with coworkers, involvement, job competency, role negotiation, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] revealed a main effect for telecommuting [F (1, 232) = 6.399, p = .012, η_p^2 = .027, observed power = .712]. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance at p = .141. This indicates that telecommuters (n = 69, m = 1.628, SD = .555) are more acculturated than traditional employees (n = 172, m = 1.777, SD = .551).

Another ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: telecommuter (yes, no); benefits (same benefits, my coworkers get more attractive benefits), covariate: familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, involvement, job competency, role negotiation] revealed a main effect for telecommuting [F (1, 232) = 5.599, p = .019, η_p^2 = .024, observed power = .654]. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance at p = .307. This indicates that telecommuters (n = 69, m = 1.867, SD = .659) are more familiar with their supervisors and feel more recognition than

traditional employees (n = 172, m = 2.078, SD = .759).

The ANCOVA for role negotiation initially showed heterogeneity of variance at p = .044. The ANCOVA was recomputed using the equal variances file. This time, Levene's test revealed homogeneity of variance at .107, as well as a main effect for telecommuting [F (1, 132) = 4.518, p = .035, η_p^2 = .033, observed power = .560]. This indicates that telecommuters (n = 69, m = 2.164, SD = .753) negotiate their roles more than traditional employees (n = 72, m = 2.259, SD = .674).

The ANCOVAs for involvement (Levene's test was not significant at .196) and job competency (Levene's test was not significant at .339) did not produce any significant results for telecommuting predicting assimilation.

In sum, telecommuters report stronger acculturation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition than nontelecommuters. These findings are supported when covariates are considered. Additionally, when covariates are included, telecommuters were found to report more role negotiation.

Why do people telecommute?

The second research question sought to examine telecommuting by asking why people choose to work remotely. Participants were asked whether they work from home or not. If they said that they did any work from home, they were prompted to enter how many hours this work spanned. A total of 126 participants indicated that they work from home at least some of the time. These participants were then asked why they choose to telecommute.

This was an open-ended descriptive question, and 121 participants

answered this question. Most responses consisted of single-word answers or short phrases, though a few responses were several lines in length. Responses were analyzed reading through them and identifying themes based on the words and phrases listed in the responses. A thematic analysis revealed 11 main reasons why employees telecommute: convenience, the nature of the job, personal preference, work environment, overtime, family, unavoidable circumstances, to save time, flexibility, to save money and productivity. Table 3 summarizes these findings.

Convenience is the main reason most telecommuters work remotely. A total of 51 participants (42.1%) indicated they work remotely for convenience. The responses that were coded in this category were mostly single-word, and almost exclusively specified convenience directly.

The second most popular reason for telecommuting is specified by the job description itself, and is called the nature of the job. Nature of the job was cited as their main reason for telecommuting by 33.9% (n = 41). While most people were straightforward in describing this category, others provided more details. Some of the responses coded into this category include: “I moved from New Jersey to California, so it was out of necessity. The nature of the job allows me to do everything online,” “a lot of work is in front of the computer, so it does not matter if [I’m] at home or at the office. I choose the office sometimes to stay in touch with my coworkers etc,” “company closed local office and sent all employees to work from home” and “the nature of the job is editing by email correspondence; going into an office would be superfluous.”

The next most common reason for telecommuting, mentioned by 23

Table 3: Reasons why people telecommute

Reason	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Convenience	51	42.1%
Nature of the job	41	33.9%
Personal preference	23	19.0%
Work environment	14	11.6%
Overtime	13	10.7%
Family	12	9.9%
Unavoidable circumstances	10	8.3%
Save time	8	6.6%
Flexibility	4	3.3%
Save money	4	3.3%
Productivity	4	3.3%
Other reasons	2	1.7%

participants (19.0%), is personal preference. While some of the other categories on the list of reasons, like flexibility and work environment, can also be considered as a "personal preference," this category is dedicated to those who attributed their telecommuting specifically to personal preference, mostly without any elaboration. One of the exceptions, who painted a more defined picture of the nature of their preference, wrote: "flexibility of location (I'm living in Europe right now and move to a new city every 5 - 6 months to experience new cultures). Also, this job happened to pay really well and the company is really well managing [sic] and fun to work for."

The actual work environment is another reason for telecommuting. Eleven and six-tenths percent (n = 14) of telecommuters indicated that they prefer working at home because they can determine the type of environment they work best in. Most responses were general remarks about the environment: "quiet work space," "elimination of distractions," "more comfortable" and "less

interruptions." These were some of the common preferences. Other responses underscored fundamental differences in what people perceive to be the ideal work environment, as well as very particular needs for getting work done: "No boss staring over my shoulder, can have a window open and listen to music." Some of the more detailed responses hinted at logistical reasons, such as "I do a lot of documentation work like—writing case [studies], etc. and writing proposals, connecting with my team, donors, volunteers, mentors through email and skype and [phone] calls. These [I cannot] do at the [center] due to lack of internet connectivity, limited space, noise levels in the community" and "at home I have an external computer monitor for my laptop and an ergonomic set up. My office is uncomfortable physically (the chair)."

The next reason is the somewhat debatable category of overtime. While this is not accounted for in conservative definitions of telecommuting, the 13 individuals (10.7%) who responded to this question clearly perceive themselves as telecommuters. That is why this category has been created, to provide a reflection of what people who (at least partially) work from home describe as their motivation for doing so. Here are some of the responses for this group: "Part of the work description was to be on call and if there was a situation where there's a call from work as they need my help—I'd start work from home," "the work from home is expected in addition to the in-office work. It usually consists of replying to emails, handling emergencies, and coordinating last-minute issues that come up outside of regular office hours" and "[every day] I need to summarize my whole day's activities."

Another key reason for telecommuters to work from home is to be there

for their families. Quite a few respondents, 9.9% (n = 12), mentioned their young children, aging parents and sick family members to explain why they telecommute. “I chose to work from home for a variety of reasons the largest being that it allowed me to be home when my children were home from school,” “helps to keep a normal family routine,” “allows me to be a stay at home mom as well as bring home a paycheck” and “easier to take care of aging parent” are some of the responses that were coded under family.

Unavoidable circumstances is the next category that 10 participants (8.3%) outlined as their major reason for telecommuting. “Due to illness or inability to go into the office for any reason (health, transportation, timing, etc.),” “I have some things to do/appointments around my house or [neighborhood] in the middle of the day,” “it is related to my visa status in [the] country” and “due to some political unrest we often […] have strikes called by political leaders, and as I am working in an INGO with some projects which have a time frame to finish within, so we have to work from home” are some distinct reasons why people work from home.

Another category identified is saving time, which 8 participants (n = 6.6%) mentioned. “It is the most efficient time-wise” and “long commute” are examples of responses that were coded into this reason.

Along the lines of a preference for a particular work environment, which has already been described, is the next category, flexibility. Although few in number (n = 4, 3.3%), the responses under this heading identified the absence of a traditional 9-5 structure as the reason for choosing to telecommute. “I can work on my own time. I often will edit at 2 a.m. I have deadlines where things have to

be submitted, but I can [choose] when I spend my time on working on the document," "I resigned an editorial job in an office setting so that, among other things, I could set my own hours and do work that was most satisfying for me" and "it works better with my school schedule" are examples of the responses.

One of the reasons, saving money, also had 3.3% (n = 4) respondents, who agree that saving money was one of their main motivations for telecommuting. Some of the responses in this category included "less gas consumption" and "to save on gas money."

The next category, productivity, also had 4 responses (3.3%) coded into this category. These respondents directly highlighted how more work gets done when they work from home: "I am more than 3 times [more] productive from home" and "ability to focus" are two examples that were coded into this category.

There were 2 responses (1.7%) to this question that did not fit into any of these categories. The responses "environmentally friendly" and "need to make more money" were put in the miscellaneous category.

These categories serve to illustrate the complex nature of telecommuting, and the variety in circumstances and preferences of the employed workforce in this day and age.

Why do some telecommuters visit the workplace?

The second part of the second research question asked whether or not telecommuters go to the office, and if they do, how often and for what purpose. Out of the 86 respondents to this question, 66.3% (n = 57) said they go into the office periodically. The responses were recoded into weeks for ease of comparison

and analysis. The group that visits the office most infrequently, made up of 12.3% of the respondents (n = 7), goes between a couple of times a year to a maximum of thrice a month. Eight and eight-tenths percent (n = 5) go in once a week, 15.8% (n = 9) go into the office twice a week, 7.0% (n = 4) go in thrice, 28.1% (n = 16) go 4 times a week and 28.2% (n = 16) go in 5 times a week or more. It is interesting to note that of the 87 telecommuters in this study, 47 (54.0%) had worked onsite before they started telecommuting. Responses to the descriptive question were grouped by theme.

Telecommuters, whose extent of telecommuting ranges from 20% (n = 10) to 100% (n = 29), described the reasons for going into the workplace as follows: for meetings, for regular work, for training purposes, for socializing and for access to the work network. These results are summarized in Table 4.

The most common reason telecommuters go into the office 64.8% (n = 35) is to attend meetings. Most responses in the meeting category were very precise and straightforward: “meeting,” “team meetings,” “meetings with team mates & clients,” “meeting with my TA.” Responses such as “feedback of [previous day's activities],” “presentations,” “client onsite visits” and “consulting coworkers to solve issues—discussing ideas with coworkers” were also coded into the meeting category.

The second most popular reason is regular work. There were 32 responses (59.3%) in this category. Some respondents were brief and somewhat vague in their descriptions; they said they go in for “work,” “daily responsibilities,” “official purpose” and “administrative duties.” Other responses were more descriptive and detailed: “helping students after school,” “coding, modeling,

Table 4: Reasons why telecommuters go into the office

Reason	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Meetings	35	64.8%
Regular work	32	59.3%
Training	7	13.0%
Socializing	7	13.0%
Access to network	2	3.7%
Other reasons	5	9.3%

designing etc.," "writing, sub editing, correction placements, photo corrections," and "my boss wants someone in the office at all times."

Training is another reason telecommuters are required to travel to the office. All of the 7 responses (13.0%) categorized mentioned training specifically.

Telecommuters, who clearly do not get to see their coworkers and supervisors as often as nontelecommuters do, go into the office to socialize. This was mentioned by 7 participants (13.0%) as one of their main reasons for visiting the onsite location. Individuals used different expressions to describe the social nature of their trip to the office. One participant, who goes onsite once a month, said one of his reasons is to "create relationships." Another, who goes onsite once a week, called it "social and networking." Other responses were "face time" and "interactions with colleagues." As one professional put it, "communication in the office is essential."

Finally, a very small number of respondents go into the office for gaining access to the work network. Despite their low number of 3.7% (n = 2), their distinct and overlapping need for accessing the network seems noteworthy.

Another 5 responses were placed in a miscellaneous category. Responses including "all my supplies, etc. are in the office," "troubleshooting," "access to

library and decent printer" and "field visit" made up this 9.3%.

How do telecommuters communicate with their supervisors and coworkers?

The third research question asked about telecommuters' communication patterns with regards to their supervisors and coworkers. The survey asked how they communicated with their supervisors and coworkers, and what channels of communication they used. They were also asked how frequently they communicated with their supervisors and coworkers. An analysis of the participants' responses to the open-ended questions "how do you communicate with your supervisor?" and "how do you communicate with your coworkers" yielded five distinct categories: email, in person, phone, instant messaging and texting, and video conferencing. The answers were mostly concise and left little room for ambiguity. There were 86 responses to both questions.

The most frequently identified channel for communicating with supervisors was email, used by 76.7% (n = 66) of the respondents. Phone calls were the second most popular channel of communication (n = 24, 27.9%). Meeting in person (n = 15, 17.4%) and instant messaging and texting (n = 13, 15.1%) were almost equally commonly used to communicate with supervisors. Video conferencing (n = 11, 12.8%) is another channel made use of by telecommuters. Finally, there was 1 (1.2%) other response, Facebook, which did not fit into any of these categories. Table 5 illustrates these results.

The telecommuting participants' frequency of communication with their supervisors (n = 83) ranged from none to 40 times a week, or 8 times a day. The

Table 5: Channels of communication with supervisor

Channel	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Email	66	76.7%
Phone	24	27.9%
In person	15	17.4%
Instant messaging and text	13	15.1%
Video conferencing	11	12.8%
Other channels	1	1.2%

responses were in terms of days, months and years, and they were recoded into weeks. The mean frequency was 6.361 times per week (*SD* = 7.881). A total of 12.0% (*n* = 10) indicated that they either do not communicate with their supervisors at all, or they communicate with them less than once a week. Some of the responses that got recoded into "no communication with supervisors" when they are actually infrequent, are "once a month," "once every two weeks," and "Once a semester… My supervisor isn't really involved." A combined 30.2% (*n* = 25) communicate once or twice a week with their supervisors. Another 28 (33.7%) respondents communicate up to 7 times a week with their supervisors, while the remaining 24.1 % (*n* = 20) communicate multiple times a day.

Over half the telecommuters, 56.0 % (*n* = 46), reported using at least one of the five channels of communication with their supervisors. Of the rest, 34.5% (*n* = 29) reported two channels, and 9.6% (*n* = 8) reported using a combination of three or four channels.

Similar to channels of communication with supervisors, the most popular channel for communicating with coworkers was also email (*n* = 62, 72.1%). Phone calls were the next most popular at 26.7% (*n* = 23), followed by instant messaging

and texting (n = 20, 23.3%). Meeting in person (n = 17, 19.8%) was the next most frequent channel for communicating with coworkers. Video conferencing (n = 8, 9.3%) is also used sometimes. Finally, there were two responses (2.3%) that did not fit into any categories. This category named Facebook as another channel of communication. These results are depicted in Table 6.

The telecommuting participants' frequency of communication with their coworkers (n = 85) was higher than the frequency of communication with supervisors.

For communication with coworkers, the frequency ranged from none to 200 times a week, or 40 times a day, assuming the work week spans 5 days. These responses were also recoded into weeks. The mean frequency was 13.641 times per week (SD = 26.749). In their responses, 9.4% (n = 8) indicated that they either do not communicate with their coworkers at all, or they communicate with them less than once a week. Some of the responses that got recoded into "no communication with coworkers" when they are less than once a week are "once a month," "they are just names on a shared spreadsheet to me" and so on. A combined 13.0% (n = 11) communicate once or twice a week with their coworkers. The largest group of 39 (45.9%) respondents communicates with their coworkers up to seven times a week, and the rest (n = 27, 31.8%) communicate multiple times a day.

For communicating with their coworkers, 57.6% of the telecommuters (n = 49) reported using at least one of the five channels. Another 30.6% (n = 26) reported two channels, and 11.8 % (n = 10) reported three or four channels.

Table 6: Channels of communication with coworkers

Channel	*Frequency*	*Percent*
Email	62	72.1%
Phone	23	26.7%
Instant messaging and text	20	23.3%
In person	17	19.8%
Video conferencing	8	9.3%
Other channels	2	2.3%

T-tests

T-tests were computed to explore the relationship between the various channels of communication and the six dimensions of assimilation in telecommuters. It was found that telecommuters who communicate with their supervisors via instant messaging and texting (n = 13, m = 1.673, SD = .534) report that they are more competent at their jobs than those who do not (n = 67, m = 2.145, SD = .667); t (78) = -2.403, p = .019.

Telecommuters who communicate with their coworkers using a phone (n = 21, m = 1.952, SD = .835) tend to be more involved than those who do not (n = 60, m = 2.516, SD = .906); t (79) = -2.503, p = .014. Telecommuters who used instant messaging and texting to communicate with their coworkers (n = 20, m = 1.737, SD = .676) score higher on job competency than those who do not (n = 60, m = 2.175, SD = .634); t (78) = -2.626, p = .010. Those who use a combination of email and meeting in person to communicate with their coworkers are more involved [(n = 8, m = 1.687, SD = .651); t (79) = -2.274, p = .026] than those who do not (n =73, m = 2.445, SD = .915) and negotiate their roles better (n = 8, m = 1.625, SD = .575) than those who do not [(n = 71, m = 2.225, SD = .765); t (77)

= .-2.145, p = .035]. Those who use a combination of email and phone to communicate with their coworkers negotiate their roles better (n = 14, m = 1.761, SD = .513) than those who do not [(n = 65, m = 2.251, SD = .788); t (77) = -2.217, p = .030]. Finally, those who use a combination of phone and meeting in person to communicate with their coworkers are significantly more acculturated (n = 2, m = 1.000, SD = .0001) than those who do not [(n = 79, m = 1.658, SD = .569); t (78) = -10.267, p = .0001] and also more involved (n = 2, m = 1.000, SD = .0001) than those who do not use this combination of communication channels [(n = 79, m = 2.405, SD = .902); t (78) = -13.837, p = .0001].

ANCOVAs

ANCOVAs were performed to investigate the relationship between number of communication channels and telecommuting status on each of the six dimensions. Number of communication channels was coded for both supervisors and coworkers as single and multiple. Multiple channels included responses that listed two to four channels. While testing the effect of one dimension, the other dimensions were added to the model as covariates.

The ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: number of communication channels with supervisors (single, multiple), telecommuter (yes, no); covariate: acculturation, involvement, job competency, role negotiation, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] for familiarity with coworkers initially showed heterogeneity of variances, and so the file with equal sample sizes was used to recompute this measure. Levene's test still showed heterogeneity of variances. Finally, a cosine transformation was used and this

time, the ANCOVA revealed a main effect for number of communication channels [F (1, 263) = 5.545, p = .019, η_p^2 = .021, observed power = .650]. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance at p = .309. This indicates that employees who use multiple channels to communicate with their supervisors (n =112, m = -.342, SD = .453) are more familiar with their coworkers than those who use only one channel (n = 160, m = -.233, SD = .469).

An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: number of communication channels with supervisors (single, multiple), telecommuter (yes, no); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, involvement, job competency, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] revealed a main effect for number of communication channels [F (1, 263) = 3.951, p = .048, η_p^2 = .015, observed power = .508]. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance at p = .300. This indicates that employees who use multiple channels to communicate with their supervisors (n =112, m = 2.142, SD = .714) negotiate their roles more than those who use only one channel (n = 160, m = 2.314, SD = .750).

An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: number of communication channels with supervisors (single, multiple), telecommuter (yes, no); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, involvement, job competency, role negotiation] revealed a main effect for telecommuting status on familiarity with supervisors and recognition [F (1, 263) = 4.144, p = .043, η_p^2 = .016, observed power = .527]. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance at p = .595. This indicates that telecommuters (n = 76, m = 1.815, SD = .642) are more familiar with supervisors and feel more recognition than nontelecommuters (n = 196, m = 2.055, SD = .733).

The ANCOVAs for number of communication channels with supervisors for acculturation (Levene's test was not significant at p = .230), involvement (Levene's test was significant at p = .053) and job competency (Levene's test was not significant at p = .759) did not yield any statistically significant results.

An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: number of communication channels with coworkers (single, multiple), telecommuter (yes, no); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, involvement, job competency, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] revealed a main effect for number of communication channels [F (1, 265) = 15.991, p = .0001, η_p^2 = .057, observed power = .979]. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance at p = .172. This indicates that employees who use multiple channels to communicate with their coworkers (n = 112, m = 2.062, SD = .711) negotiate their roles more than those who use only one channel (n = 162, m = 2.366, SD = .733).

The ANCOVAs for number of channels of communication with coworkers for familiarity with coworkers (Levene's test was not significant at p = .090), acculturation (Levene's test was not significant at p = .155), involvement (Levene's test was not significant at p = .768), job competency (Levene's test was not significant at p = .506) and combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition (Levene's test was not significant at p = .862) did not yield any statistically significant results.

Regression

A series of regressions were run to test if the frequency of communication with supervisors or coworkers predicted any of the six assimilation factors. It was

found that frequency of communication with supervisors had a statistically significant relationship with familiarity with supervisors and recognition, β = -.035, t (74) = -3.467, p = .001. Results show that 13% of the variance was explained; F (2, 74) = 6.612, adjusted R^2 = *.129,* p= .002. Frequency of communication with coworkers, however, did not yield any significant results, β = .002, t (74) = .659, p = .512.

Research question 3b asked whether communication channels and frequency of communication predicted assimilation in telecommuters. The results show that frequency of communication with supervisors predicted familiarity with supervisors and recognition. The results of t-tests, ANCOVAs and regressions suggest that choice of communication channels and frequency of communication appear to have a strong influence on telecommuters' assimilation.

Employees' use of multiple channels of communication tends to result in higher familiarity with coworkers. Acculturation appears to be higher in telecommuters who use a combination of phone and meeting face to face to communicate with their coworkers. In terms of involvement, telecommuters that use phone, a combination of phone and meeting in person, and a combination of email and meeting in person are more involved than telecommuters who do not use these channels. Job competency appears to be higher in telecommuters who communicate with their supervisors and coworkers using instant messaging and texting. A number of communication patterns appear to be associated with higher role negotiation: telecommuters who communicate with their coworkers using a combination of email and meeting in person as well as email and phone

tend to negotiate their roles more; employees who use multiple channels to communicate with their supervisors and coworkers also report higher role negotiation than those who use a single channel. Finally, it was found that higher frequency of communication with supervisors leads to higher familiarity with supervisors and recognition in employees.

Hypothesis 1 posited that telecommuters who communicate with their supervisors and coworkers frequently and use multiple channels are more familiar with their supervisors and coworkers. This was partially supported, as frequency of communication with supervisors lead to higher familiarity with supervisors and recognition. However, frequency of communication with coworkers did not predict any of the six assimilation dimensions.

The second hypothesis proposed that increased interaction predicts higher role negotiation. This was partially supported by the finding that various combinations of communication channels resulted in higher role negotiation in telecommuters and nontelecommuters.

Impact of perceived benefits on assimilation

The fourth research question investigated the impact of benefits on assimilation. Benefits were measured on three levels: “I have the same benefits as my coworkers,” “My coworkers get more attractive benefits than I do” and “I get more attractive benefits than my coworkers;” however, due to the low number of telecommuting participants perceiving their benefits to be more attractive than their coworkers’ (n = 6), this group was omitted from the analyses.

A chi-square test was performed to test whether there was a difference

between perceived benefits and telecommuting status or not. The percentage of telecommuting and traditional participants did not differ by perceived benefits: X^2 (1) = .774, p =.379.

A series of ANCOVAs were done to test for a relationship between benefits and telecommuting status on the six assimilation dimensions. For the first ANCOVA, testing for a relationship between benefits, telecommuting and familiarity with coworkers, Levene's test showed heterogeneity of variances. Therefore, a new file was created with equal sample sizes. However, variances still showed heterogeneity. Familiarity with coworkers was then transformed into cosine, and another ANCOVA was computed. This time, Levene's test showed homogeneity of variances at p = .469, and a main effect for benefits was detected. This ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: telecommuter (yes, no), benefits (same benefits, my coworkers get more attractive benefits); covariate: acculturation, involvement, job competency, role negotiation, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] revealed a main effect of benefits, F (1, 132) = 4.951, p = .028, η_p^2 = .036, observed power = .598. This suggests that employees who perceive their benefits to be the same as their coworkers' (n = 115, m = -.319, SD = .423) are more familiar with their coworkers than those who perceive their coworkers' benefits to be more attractive (n = 26, m = -.161, SD = .550).

The original data file was used for the rest of the analyses (unless mentioned otherwise). An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: telecommuter (yes, no), benefits (same benefits, my coworkers get more attractive benefits); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, involvement, job competency, role negotiation, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] revealed an

interaction effect of benefits and telecommuting status on acculturation, F (1, 232) = 5.026, p = .026, η_p^2 = .021, observed power = .607. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance, at p = .141. This suggests that telecommuters who feel that their coworkers get more attractive benefits (n = 16, m = 1.416, SD = .463) are more acculturated than those who feel that they have equal benefits (n = 53, m = 1.691, SD = .569). The opposite is true for traditional employees; traditional employees who feel that their coworkers get more attractive benefits (n = 34, m = 2.049, SD = .657) are less acculturated than those who feel that they get equal benefits (n = 138, m = 1.710, SD = .502). This shows that telecommuters who feel that their coworkers get more attractive benefits are the most acculturated, and traditional employees who feel that their coworkers get more attractive benefits are the least acculturated.

An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: telecommuter (yes, no), benefits (same benefits, my coworkers get more attractive benefits); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, job competency, role negotiation, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] revealed a main effect of perceived benefits on involvement, F (1, 232) = 4.934, p = .027, η_p^2 = .021, observed power = .599. Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variance, at p = .196. This suggests that employees who feel that they have equal benefits as their coworkers (n =191, m = 2.411, SD = .885) are more involved than those who feel that their coworkers get more attractive benefits (n = 50, m = 2.920, SD = 1.209).

The ANCOVA for role negotiation initially showed heterogeneity of variance at p = .044. The ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: telecommuter (yes, no), benefits (same benefits, my coworkers get more attractive benefits);

covariate: familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, involvement, job competency, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] was recomputed using the equal variances file. This time, Levene's test revealed homogeneity of variance at .107, as well as an interaction effect for telecommuting and benefits, [F (1, 132) = 7.940, p = .006, η_p^2 = .057, observed power = .799]. It was found that telecommuters who feel that they have equal benefits (n =53, m = 2.132, SD = .702) negotiate their roles more than those who feel that their coworkers get more attractive benefits (n = 16, m = 2.270, SD = .920). The opposite is true for traditional employees; traditional employees who feel that their coworkers get more attractive benefits (n = 10, m = 2.100, SD = .498) negotiate their roles more than those who feel that they get equal benefits (n = 62, m = 2.284, SD = .698).

An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: telecommuter (yes, no), benefits (same benefits, my coworkers get more attractive benefits); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, involvement, job competency, role negotiation] revealed an interaction effect of perceived benefits on combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition, F (1, 232) = 3.911, p = .049, η_p^2 = .017, observed power = .504. Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variance, at p = .307. It was found that telecommuters who feel that their coworkers get more attractive benefits (n =16, m = 1.591, SD = .439) are more familiar with their supervisors and feel more recognition than those who perceive that they have equal benefits (n = 53, m = 1.951, SD = .694). The opposite is true for traditional employees; traditional employees who feel that their coworkers get more attractive benefits (n =34, m = 2.408, SD = .819) are less familiar with their supervisors and feel less

recognition than those who feel that they get equal benefits (n = 138, m =1.997, SD = .724).

The ANCOVA for job competency (Levene's test was not significant at p = .339) did not yield any statistically significant results.

In sum, there were no differences between telecommuters' and nontelecommuters' perceptions of benefits in terms of familiarity with coworkers and involvement. Employees who perceive their benefits to be the same as their coworkers' tend to be more familiar with their coworkers and more involved than those who perceive their coworkers' benefits to be more attractive. However, in terms of acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition, telecommuters and nontelecommuters behaved differently based on their perceptions of their benefits. Telecommuters who feel their coworkers get more attractive benefits report higher acculturation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition than telecommuters who think they have equal benefits. This is reversed in traditional employees, where nontelecommuters who feel their coworkers get more attractive benefits report less acculturation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition than those who feel they get similar benefits. In terms of role negotiation, it was found that telecommuters who think that their coworkers get more attractive benefits report lower role negotiation than those who think they get equal benefits. Conversely, nontelecommuters who think their coworkers' benefits are more attractive report higher role negotiation than those who perceive to have equal benefits. Thus, to answer the forth research question, perceived benefits had an impact on telecommuters' assimilation, particularly on acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with

supervisors and recognition.

Effects of gender and telecommuting on assimilation

T-tests and ANCOVAs

To test the effect of gender on the six dimensions of assimilation, a t-test was computed. The t-test supported the finding that women (n =172, m = 2.436, SD = .972) are significantly more involved than men (n = 149, m = 2.651, SD = .980); t (319) = 1.967, p = .050.

The t-tests for familiarity with coworkers [t (319) = -.146, p = .884], acculturation [t (318) = .279, p = .780], job competency [t (316) = -.229, p = .819], role negotiation [t (316) = .757, p = .449] and combined familiarity with supervisors and recognition [t (311.627) = -.660, p = .510] did not produce statistically significant results.

An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: gender (male, female), telecommuter (yes, no); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, involvement, job competency, role negotiation, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] revealed an interaction effect between gender and telecommuting status, F (1, 266) = 4.842, p = .029, η_p^2 = .018, observed power = .592. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance at p = .827. This indicates that female telecommuters (n = 53, m = 1.553, SD = .565) are more acculturated than male telecommuters (n = 25, m = 1.800, SD = .535). However, female nontelecommuters (n = 97, m = 1.821, SD = .550) are less acculturated than male nontelecommuters (n = 100, m = 1.713, SD = .554).

The ANCOVAs for familiarity with coworkers (Levene's test was not

significant at p = .052), involvement (Levene's test was not significant at p = .616), job competency (Levene's test was not significant at p = .647), role negotiation (Levene's test was not significant at p = .851) and combined familiarity with supervisors and recognition (Levene's test was not significant at p = .233) revealed no statistically significant main effects of telecommuting or gender, and no interaction between telecommuting and gender.

These findings address research question 5 and show that there is a difference in the assimilation of telecommuters based on their gender in terms of acculturation.

Impact of managerial status on assimilation

Participants were asked whether they were managers or not, and if they were, how many people they supervised. Out of the 338 participants who answered this question, 87 respondents indicated that they were managers. The team sizes ranged from 1 to 2500, with an average of 54.09 (SD = 272.767).

ANCOVAs

ANCOVAs were performed to investigate the relationship between managerial status and telecommuting status on each of the six dimensions. While testing the effect of one dimension, the other dimensions were added to the model as covariates. An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: manager (yes, no), telecommuter (yes, no); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, involvement, job competency, role negotiation, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] revealed a main effect of managerial status [F (1, 266) = 7.553, p = .006, η_p^2 = .028, observed power = .782]. Levene's test showed homogeneity of

variance at p = .544. This indicates managers (n = 70, m = 1.495, SD = .540) are more acculturated than nonmanagers (n = 205, m = 1.811, SD = .543).

An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: number of communication channels with supervisors (single, multiple), telecommuter (yes, no); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, involvement, job competency, combined familiarity with supervisor and recognition] revealed a main effect for managerial status, F (1, 266) = 23.652, p = .0001, η_p^2 = .082, observed power = .998. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance at p = .224. This indicates that managers (n = 70, m = 1.747, SD = .655) negotiate their roles in their organizations more than nonmanagers (n = 205, m = 2.411, SD = .687).

An ANCOVA [between-subjects factor: manager (yes, no), telecommuter (yes, no); covariate: familiarity with coworkers, acculturation, involvement, job competency, role negotiation] revealed a main effect for managerial status [F (1, 266) = 6.078, p = .014, η_p^2 = .022, observed power = .690]. Levene's test showed homogeneity of variance at p = .054. This indicates that managers (n = 70, m = 1.929, SD = .763) score higher on familiarity with supervisors and recognition than nonmanagers (n = 205, m = 2.029, SD = .707).

ANCOVAs for familiarity with coworkers (Levene's test was not significant at p = .050), involvement (Levene's test was not significant at p = .110) and job competency (Levene's test was not significant at p = .247) did not yield any statistically significant results.

Hypothesis 3 stated that both telecommuting and nontelecommuting managers would be more assimilated than nonmanagers. The hypothesis was partially supported; managers, regardless of their telecommuting status, scored

higher on acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition than nonmanagers.

Impact of tenure on assimilation

Hypothesis 4 posited that tenure would impact the assimilation of telecommuters and nontelecommuters. Duration of employment was an open-ended question, and the responses were in varying units, like months and years. They were all recoded into months. Participants' duration of employment ranged from 0 months to 34 years, with a mean of 31.18 months (2.59 years) and a standard deviation of 43.225 months (3.6 years), and a median of 18.00 months (1.5 years). Following Gailliard, Myers and Seibold's (2010) lead, the reported tenures were divided into quartiles, which resulted in the following groups: 0 to 8 months (n = 87), 9 to 18 months (n = 86), 19 to 36 months (n = 91) and 37 to 408 months (n = 74).

MANOVA

Because Gailliard, Myers and Seibold (2010) relied on a MANOVA, a MANOVA was computed to test the difference in assimilation of telecommuters and nontelecommuters based on their duration of employment. The overall MANOVA for the interaction effect of duration of employment and telecommuting was not significant. There were two statistically significant main effects for telecommuting status, F (6, 263) = 2.586, Wilks' λ = .944, p = .019, η_p^2 = .056, observed power = .847, and tenure, F (18, 744.362) = 1.856, Wilks' λ = .883, p = .017, η_p^2 = .041, observed power = .959, separately.

The ANOVAs were significant for two dimensions under tenure, job competency [F (3, 268) = 6.428, p = .0001, η_p^2 = .067, observed power = .968] and role negotiation [F (3, 268) = 3.823, p = .010, η_p^2 = .041, observed power = .816]. Under telecommuting status, familiarity with supervisors and recognition [F (1, 268) = 4.759, p = .030, η_p^2 = .017, observed power = .585] was significant. A post-hoc Bonferroni test revealed that group 4, those who have been in their current roles for 37 months or more (n = 58, m = 1.784, *SD* = .534), report significantly higher job competency than groups 1 (n = 73, m = 2.171, *SD* = .616) and 2 (n = 71, m = 2.165, *SD* = .633). Similarly, group 4 (n = 58, m = 1.988, *SD* = .683) also reports significantly higher role negotiation than groups 1 (n = 73, m = 2.379, *SD* = .665) and 2 (n = 71, m = 2.380, *SD* = .793) on. This also reveals that telecommuters (n = 79, m = 1.860, *SD* = .670) report significantly stronger familiarity with supervisors and recognition than nontelecommuters (n =197, m = 2.060, *SD* = .734).

ANCOVAs confirmed these results.

Thus, the hypothesis is partially supported. Tenure impacts the assimilation of both telecommuters and nontelecommuters; specifically, those who have been in their current positions for over 37 months are more assimilated on the dimensions of job competency and role negotiation.

<u>What other factors influence assimilation?</u>

A number of t-tests and regressions were computed to see what other factors might influence the assimilation of telecommuters. Telecommuters were asked if they had worked onsite before they started telecommuting. Of the 87

telecommuters who answered this question, 54.0% (n = 47) responded positively. The responses ranged from 6 hours and 4 days to several months and even several years. These responses were recoded into months, and ranged from 0 to 264 months (22 years), with a mean of 21.82 months (1.8 years). The t-test did not produce any statistically significant results to support a relationship between working onsite first and the six factors of assimilation.

A series of regressions were run to test if the duration of working onsite before telecommuting predicted any of the six assimilation factors. There were no statistically significant results for familiarity with coworkers, F (1, 56) = .728, p = .397, acculturation, F (1, 56) = 2.765, p = .102, involvement, F (1, 56) = .476, p = .493, job competency, F (1, 55) = 1.025, p = .316, role negotiation, F (1, 54) = .075, p = .785, or combined familiarity with supervisors and recognition, F (1, 56) = .314, p = .578. It was found that duration onsite did not predict the assimilation of telecommuters.

A t-test was computed to test the differences between telecommuters and nontelecommuters based on age. It was found that telecommuters (n = 86, m = 33.88, SD = 10.258) tend to be older than traditional employees (n = 210, m = 28.85, SD = 7.579); t (124.718) = 4.112, p = .0001.

The responses to all the descriptive questions on the survey are provided in Appendix C.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to demystify the relationship between telecommuting and assimilation. Pertinent variables that were also investigated in telecommuters are communication patterns, perceived benefits, gender, managerial status and tenure. A number of noteworthy findings emerged. These are discussed in the following sections, with calls for further research where appropriate. This is followed by practical implications, limitations, and broader recommendations for future research.

Main findings regarding telecommuting and assimilation

This study has identified a number of interesting differences between telecommuters and nontelecommuters. While both telecommuters and nontelecommuters reported positive assimilation, telecommuters scored slightly higher than nontelecommuters on three assimilation dimensions. Telecommuters were found to report higher acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition than their collocated counterparts.

This could be for a number of reasons. As is the case with all self-reported data, it could be that telecommuters, who have previously been found to feel

isolated, ignored or “forgotten,” reported higher levels of acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition in order to appear more capable and competent. Telecommuters may also be sensitized to the challenges of telecommuting and the concerns regarding their assimilation. This exposure or awareness may have influenced their responses on the survey. It could also be that telecommuters, fearing falling behind or being at a disadvantage, make an effort to take on additional responsibilities and engagements to make an impression on the onsite team, so as to enrich and catalyze their professional trajectory. As a result, they may be more assimilated than nontelecommuters.

In the definition of telecommuting, it was specified that an employee would be considered a telecommuter if they worked remotely at least 20% of the time. Although there were a number of respondents who worked exclusively from home, the definition suggests that telecommuters could be spending up to 80% of their time in the workplace. Additionally, the telecommuters in this study reported a strong connection with the workplace. Over 66% visit the office periodically, with 56.3% going in four or more times weekly. From an assimilation standpoint, it seems likely that the telecommuters potentially have similar access to assimilation opportunities like nontelecommuters. A stricter definition and telecommuters with less frequent visits to the office may lead to different assimilation outcomes.

Past studies have explained that in many cases, telecommuters are chosen by their managers after having worked at the central location first (Baruch, 2000; Kurland & Cooper, 2002). The participants in this study were found to be

significantly older in the telecommuter group, and over 50% indicated they had worked onsite first. Age and having worked onsite first, which potentially lead to more knowledge of how the system functions, may have influenced this as well.

All these factors indicate that telecommuting is nuanced, complex and multifarious. The variability within the telecommuting group may have influenced the findings of telecommuters' assimilation. Therefore, although this study found telecommuters to be more assimilated on three dimensions of the OAI than nontelecommuters, this warrants further investigation to see if these results hold.

The telecommuters' perspective

This study, building on previous researchers' work, has identified 11 main motivations for telecommuting. Convenience, the nature of the job, personal preference, family, work environment, overtime, unavoidable circumstances, saving time, flexibility, saving money and productivity. Previous studies have also identified some of these reasons (Dimitrova, 2003; Kurland & Cooper, 2002; Reinsch, 1997), and this list expands those categories.

Over 50% of telecommuters report visiting the central office at least four times a week, which is a significant finding. The nature of these visits ranged from formal, structured ones to informal, personal ones. Meetings, regular work, training, accessing the network and socializing were the five main purposes they described. This strong relationship with the central office may have influenced telecommuters' higher scores on the assimilation dimensions (reported in the previous section). Generally, telecommuters, with fewer opportunities for face

time and informal learning, do not have access to the same information-seeking socialization tactics (Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007; Miller, 2015) that traditional employees do. However, these results suggest that these opportunities do not adequately explain differences between telecommuters and nontelecommuters. If opportunities for face time was a meaningful issue, those telecommuters who had first worked onsite would have reported stronger assimilation than those who had not. Instead, assimilation was not found to be a function of the extent of onsite presence. It may be that the use of information-seeking tactics does not differ between telecommuters and their collocated counterparts.

Frequent visits to the office mean more opportunities for face time with supervisors and coworkers. One study investigating communication patterns in a team found that email and face-to-face interaction are complimentary in nature. Face-to-face communication is more useful for problem solving, while email is more effective for control, information distribution and for invoking specific actions (McKenney, Zack & Doherty, 1992, as qtd. in Baruch, 2000). This helps explain the findings of the present study: telecommuters, with a higher probability of using computer-mediated communication forms like email in combination with face-to-face utilize these channels to fulfill a wider array of communication goals. It can be speculated that telecommuters consequently become more assimilated than traditional employees, who are less likely to use this combination to the extent that telecommuters do. That nontelecommuters are also likely to have access to email and face-to-face communication cannot be disregarded. Thus, more research needs to be done to refine existing understandings of the assimilation process in telecommuters relative to

nontelecommuters.

Communicating and telecommuting

Five distinct communication channels are prevalent among telecommuters: email, face-to-face, phone, instant messaging and texting, and video conferencing. Email and phone are used most commonly. It is interesting to note that over 15 years ago, a study (Reinsch, 1997) examining communication channels used by telecommuters identified a similar pattern; phones were among the top two most used channels. It seems intuitive that fax machines, which were popular in those days, have been replaced by email. Another study (Duxbury & Neufeld, 1999) also confirms that phones are used most predominantly, followed by face-to-face interactions.

A noteworthy finding is that telecommuters' frequency of communication with their coworkers is twice as high as their communication with their supervisors. This pattern is consistent with Duxbury and Neufeld's (1999) finding that telecommuters communicate with their coworkers on a daily basis, and their managers on a weekly basis. Although beyond the scope of this research, it would be interesting to see if this is due to the content of the conversation. It can be speculated that telecommuters interact with supervisors for work-related information, and with coworkers for both work and for socializing. This substantiates telecommuters' strong acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and coworkers. There is also potential for investigating the impact of the content of communication on telecommuters' assimilation.

Choice of channels used for communication with both supervisors and coworkers had a relationship with the assimilation of telecommuters and nontelecommuters. It was found that employees (both telecommuters and nontelecommuters) who use multiple channels for communicating with their supervisors report higher familiarity with coworkers. Telecommuters who use a combination of phone and meeting face-to-face to communicate with their coworkers were found to be more acculturated. Telecommuters who use phones, a combination of phone and meeting in person, and a combination of email and meeting in person appear to be more involved than telecommuters who do not use these channels. Job competency was found to be higher in telecommuters who communicate with their supervisors and coworkers using instant messaging and texting. In terms of role negotiation, it was found that telecommuters who communicate with their coworkers using a combination of email and meeting in person as well as email and phone negotiate their roles more. Employees who use multiple channels to communicate with their supervisors and coworkers also report higher role negotiation than those who use a single channel. Finally, it was found that higher frequency of communication with supervisors resulted in higher familiarity with supervisors and recognition in employees.

The positive relationship between communication technologies and assimilation has been established in prior studies (Waldeck, Seibold & Flanagin, 2004). The present study furthers this idea, and reveals the complexities of varied communication channels and their influence on different dimensions of the OAI in the context of telecommuting. Engaging in communication that reduces uncertainty and stress can lead to a “heightened state of organizational

assimilation" (Waldek, Seibold & Flanagin, 2004). Utilizing a variety of channels and combinations of channels provides increased opportunities for reducing uncertainty, which has likely contributed to the higher assimilation reported by telecommuters in this study. The findings reported here provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between communication and assimilation among telecommuters.

The role of perceived benefits

With the rising importance of benefits to employees today, it was expected that perceived benefits would impact telecommuters' and nontelecommuters' assimilation. Employees in general were found to be more familiar with their coworkers and more involved when they perceived their benefits to be similar to their coworkers'.

An unanticipated finding was that telecommuters and nontelecommuters behave completely differently in terms of acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition based on perceived benefits. Telecommuters who feel their coworkers get more attractive benefits than they do are more acculturated and report higher familiarity with supervisors and recognition than those who feel they get similar benefits. Nontelecommuters, on the other hand, are more acculturated and report higher familiarity with supervisors and recognition when they feel that they get equal benefits. While it seems intuitive that perceiving coworkers' benefits as more attractive would be demoralizing, as is the case with nontelecommuters, it appears to function as motivation in telecommuters; telecommuters proactively seek out information

about the organizational culture and expectations, and are more assimilated when they perceive their benefits to be less attractive. In terms of role negotiation, nontelecommuters who perceive their coworkers' benefits to be more attractive than their own report higher role negotiation than those who think they have equal benefits. The reverse is true for telecommuters, who report higher role negotiation when they perceive they get similar benefits. One would expect employees to negotiate their roles more when they perceive their own benefits to be less attractive, which was found in nontelecommuters; however, it appears that telecommuters negotiate their roles more when they feel their benefits are comparable to their coworkers'. This may be in order to negotiate even better benefits, or more favorable job responsibilities.

The present study has identified a relationship between perceived benefits and assimilation; telecommuters' and nontelecommuters' perceptions of benefits influence their acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition, albeit in different ways. It is important for future research to examine this relationship in greater detail to further understand predictors of assimilation.

Other findings

This study found gender to have an impact on the involvement and acculturation of employees. In terms of involvement, women scored higher than men. Female telecommuters were more acculturated than male telecommuters. This was reversed in traditional employees, where male nontelecommuters were more acculturated than female nontelecommuters. The pattern in telecommuters

is consistent with the findings of Gailliard, Myers and Seibold (2010) that women are more acculturated than men. However, their finding that men negotiate their roles more than women was not supported in this study.

In terms of gender, previous research has shown that young men have a better relationship with their managers (supervisors) than older women (Reinsch, 1997). No significant relationships were found for gender influencing familiarity with supervisors and recognition among telecommuters and nontelecommuters in this research. Belanger (1998) found that gender influenced people's decision to telecommute, and states that women have been "at risk of being forced" (p. 141) into telecommuting arrangements. Whether this holds true for the present population was not tested, however, 70% of the telecommuters in this study were women. According to Noonan and Glass (2012), this is not representative of the telecommuting population in the United States, which challenges the generalizability of these findings. However, their most recent census data are from 2004, and it is possible that the population has changed since then. Also, since this research was not limited geographically, it is likely that people in other countries took the survey. This makes it even more difficult to determine the population dynamics accurately. Future research would benefit from recruiting a sample closely resembling the latest census data available for their countries of interest. The dynamics of gender and voluntary versus required telecommuting in relation to assimilation could also be investigated.

Although there were no differences between telecommuters and nontelecommuters based on managerial status, there were noteworthy findings for managers in general. As expected, managers were more assimilated than

nonmanagers; managers reported higher acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition. These findings are corroborated by Gailliard, Myers and Seibold (2010), who also found managers to score higher on role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors (their study had recognition as a separate dimension). They also found higher familiarity with coworkers and job competency in managers, which was not found in the present research. The findings for managers in this study substantiate a previous study, which revealed that managers who network the most rise up the corporate ladder faster than those who do not (Luthans, 1988, as qtd. in Kurland & Cooper, 2002). Networking entails interaction, seeking or exchanging information and building relationships. I surmise networking furthers overall assimilation—in particular, higher acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition—and is likely to contribute to professional advancement.

The findings for managers' assimilation are surprising when compared to the findings for telecommuters. Both groups report high assimilation scores on the same OAI dimensions (acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition). Although there were no results for the effect of the interaction of telecommuting and managerial status, this observation suggests that telecommuters and managers have similar employment experiences. It could also indicate that telecommuters, in the process of adjusting to remote work conditions, develop skills typical of managers.

This research sought to identify factors that influence the assimilation of telecommuters. Telecommuting status did not affect managers' assimilation, as expected, which indicates that managers are more likely to report high

acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition regardless of their work location. These findings suggest that managers are more aware of organizational practices and how to use strategies to further their own professional goals. This is encouraging, because managers often play a vital role in conveying organizational expectations to both telecommuters and collocated employees (Fay & Kline, 2011). Research has also shown that managers become a telecommuter's lifeline to the organization (Kurland & Copper, 2002), and this has implications for organizations concerned with managing a dispersed workforce. Future research should try to determine factors that influence managers' assimilation patterns in greater detail, in hopes of ultimately developing training programs to help nonmanagers feel more assimilated.

Another finding was that telecommuters tend to be older than traditional employees. Although past research has not found age to predict telecommuting (Belanger, 1998), it has found that many employers prefer to have employees work onsite for a certain period of time before offering them telecommuting as an option. This might explain the difference in age between telecommuters and nontelecommuters. It might seem intuitive that duration spent onsite before telecommuting would make a difference in telecommuters' assimilation. It did not show up as a predictor of assimilation in this study, but future research should investigate duration onsite.

Practical implications

"The management of teleworkers, *as a human process*, means understanding the social and organizational context of telework, and modifying

management systems and approaches to match these contexts" (Daniels, Lamond & Standen, 2000, p.1). This research contributes to the body of existing literature of telecommuters' social and organizational context by reexamining former findings and investigating aspects that have not been adequately studied. The empirical results of this study have pragmatic implications for organizations employing telecommuters and these are discussed in this section.

This study has demonstrated that there are many variables influencing assimilation in telecommuters. It has revealed the complexity of communication habits, gender, position and age. While these are important contributions to the existing body of research on telecommuting, they also point out that there are likely other complexities that were not considered here, such as whether telecommuting was voluntary or not and participants' geographical location or cultural identity.

The finding that telecommuters in this study report higher assimilation (they feel more acculturated, more familiar with their supervisors and more recognition, and are more likely to negotiate their roles) than their collocated counterparts indicates that telecommuters are active members of their organizations. A major implication derived here is that this debunks the myth of telecommuters being disengaged and alienated from their workplaces, which has been implied by previous research (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006), and lends more credibility to the practice of telecommuting (Fonner & Roloff, 2010).

Organizations are often hesitant to employ telecommuters or offer flexible employment, because telecommuters have a poor reputation in terms of their productivity, performance and engagement. Peters, Tijdens and Wetzels (2004)

outline a number of reasons why organizations are reluctant to offer remote work opportunities, or in other words, recruit telecommuters: Fears for data security, high IT costs, erosion of the traditional work style, additional responsibility for managers, workers' productivity and work quality, and decreased interaction between the employer and employees. While the first two items are beyond the scope of the field of communication and this thesis, the other concerns can be accounted for here. Telecommuting challenges the traditional style of work, but does this change equate with erosion? If the problem lies strictly with physical, temporal and spatial boundaries, then telecommuting does erode that dynamic. However, if the focus is on work ethic and performance, then this should not be an issue. The empirical findings in this thesis show that telecommuters are confident in their roles, proactive and engaged. Performing well on the OAI implies that telecommuters are more likely to be productive, reliable, satisfied and committed. This is supported by other studies as well (Waldeck et al., 2004). Additional benefits telecommuting offers to organizations include financial gains, less absenteeism and access to a larger labor market (Baruch, 2000).

In order to promote assimilation and reap the benefits of a successful telecommuting program, it is important for all employees, including telecommuters, to be aware of how their contributions fit in with those of their coworkers and the broader goals of the organization (Fritz, Narasimhan & Rhee, 1998). Organizations should focus on developing strategies that encourage communication between all team members, to help telecommuters cultivate relationships with their coworkers. Training is a useful tool, but Kurland and Cooper (2002) report that even when training is present, it is inadequate and

depends on the individual supervisors. Effective training programs need to be implemented, where all parties involved and affected by telecommuting are provided with guidelines regarding expectations, potential challenges of telecommuting, and ways to minimize the difficulties. These efforts are expected to help telecommuters understand the context of their employment and their contributions better, and encourage them to feel like they are part of a team environment. Effective teamwork has also been found to raise productivity, efficiency and job satisfaction (Lamond, 2000, p.24), which is crucial in telecommuting environments. However, there are certain jobs which may not call for teamwork to the extent that others do. For those positions, relationship building and networking would still be valuable, but not mandated.

This study has found that the use of a variety of communication channels impacts assimilation positively. Organizations should take measures to encourage communication and foster relationship development. Oftentimes, managers and supervisors play an active and integral role in recruiting and socializing their team members. Participating in the selection and socialization of new team members has positive impacts on managers' own assimilation. This research has affirmed that managers are significantly more assimilated than nonmanagers, and this highlights the potential for managers to mentor telecommuters and impart their knowledge of the organizational culture. Opportunities for informal communication should also be provided. Research shows that managers prefer using information-rich media, like face-to-face interaction, for communicating (Duxbury & Neufeld, 1994), and so periodic meetings should be scheduled. After the structured meetings, attendees could be given the opportunity to socialize

informally. Alternatively, since this frequently may not be feasible for telecommuters situated in different countries, management can provide platforms such as an online forum or an internal networking site for telecommuters to get to know their coworkers on a more personal level. Once again, this is not relevant for all telecommuting jobs, but the ones that benefit from a team environment.

Aside from contributing to developing a better understanding of organizational assimilation, communication technologies enhancing assimilation in telecommuters have practical implications for organizations and employers. Out of the eight outcomes of assimilation determined by various combinations of communication channels used, phones and instant messaging and texting, either by themselves or in combination with other channels, were mentioned in six. This information can be used by organizations aiming to increase the likelihood of their telecommuters' acculturation, involvement, job competency and role negotiation, by promoting contact via phones and enabling it by providing them with phones (as a benefit or in addition to other necessary equipment).

Above all, telecommuting should be seen as a "creative use of human resources" (Baruch, 2000), and as such, telecommuters need to be provided with innovative career advancement options. An article in *Strategic Direction* describes employing business hubs, such as Grid70 in Grand Rapids Michigan. What these do is provide an open access workspace where professionals can interact with people who work in different organizations or have different areas of expertise. This would allow for the "cross-fertilization of ideas" (p. 17), and provide professional growth opportunities, which will contribute to the ongoing

assimilation process.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

In spite of these pertinent results, this study has a number of limitations, which, when taken into account and improved, can yield more definitive results. One of the main concerns is the self-report aspect of survey research. While survey research was the most appropriate form of data collection for this study, it is likely that some participants may have biased their responses to reflect their ideal rather than actual assimilation, similar to the Hawthorne effect. One way to go about this may be to recruit employee-manager pairs, which would lead to more accuracy in reporting the various items, such as the channels and frequency of communication or reasons for visiting the office. Future research should account for this limitation and implement steps to minimize and potentially eliminate the bias.

This study only examined one moment in telecommuters' and nontelecommuters' careers. The one-shot approach was useful in conducting basic exploratory research. Another approach would be to conduct longitudinal, developmental research (also recommended by the creators of the OAI), which would further our understandings of assimilation in telecommuting environments.

Another limitation is the unequal sample sizes. Despite promoting the survey on various platforms and for over 5 months, it was difficult to reach telecommuting populations. There were about 215 traditional employees and 87 telecommuters in the final sample (approximately, since not all participants

answered all questions). For some analyses, the subgroups were so small that they had to be discarded from the analyses, which may have hurt the results. For the analysis of benefits, for example, there were only five responses in the category for "I get more attractive benefits than my coworkers." This restricts the conclusions that can be drawn from the research, and future researchers should ensure larger sample sizes.

The number of tests computed is a serious cause for concern. It may be because of this that some statistically significant findings were due to chance. Future studies should replicate this research to see if these findings hold true.

Some of the analyses conducted yielded low values for the observed power. O'Keefe (2007) explains that SPSS's observed power is "based on treating the obtained sample effect size as the population effect size." Although he suggests that SPSS's observed power figures are "not especially helpful" and can be "badly misunderstood" (p. 296), another resource states that a power of .80 or greater is "generally considered acceptable" ("ANOVA: Power and size"). A number of the statistical tests computed in this study had observed power values below .80, some as low as .504. This may account for some of the results indicating higher assimilation in telecommuters. The results were reported since this study was exploratory in nature. However, future research should pay closer attention to obtaining larger sample sizes and raising the observed power.

Previous studies have found contradictory impacts of telecommuting on the relationship between employees and their supervisors: telecommuters have been found to have both a stronger relationship (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007) as well as a weaker relationship (Reinsch, 1997) with their managers. This study

corroborates Gajendran and Harrison's (2007) finding that telecommuters appear to be more familiar with their supervisors and feel more recognition than nontelecommuters. While this is a promising and desirable outcome of assimilation in telecommuters, more research needs to be undertaken to understand the relationship better.

Another potential shortcoming of this study is that some aspects of telecommuting were overgeneralized or left ambiguous. For instance, no distinction was made between voluntary and involuntary telecommuting. While "nature of the job" came up when telecommuters identified their motivations for telecommuting, this does not capture their attitudes towards it. Did they take the job because they wished to telecommute, or did they simply happen to get a job that required telecommuting? Whether employees opted in or were nudged into telecommuting may impact their approach to their jobs, and impact their assimilation, job satisfaction and performance.

This study also did not emphasize the location of "remote" work, such as whether telecommuters worked from home or from a satellite office, among others. Some researchers (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006) suggest that the exact location of working may have an impact on the identification, and by extension assimilation, of telecommuters. Future researchers may want to take these ambiguities into account.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study put the spotlight on underexamined assimilation patterns in telecommuters. Although previous research suggests that telecommuters are alienated from their organizations (Thatcher & Zhu, 2006), this study challenges that notion. The present study has found that telecommuters reveal higher acculturation, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition than traditional employees. Certain communication patterns and practices have also shown higher acculturation, involvement, job competency and role negotiation in telecommuters. Male telecommuters have been found to be more acculturated than female nontelecommuters, and female telecommuters have shown higher acculturation than both male and female nontelecommuters. Finally, telecommuters who perceive their coworkers' benefits to be more attractive than their own have also been found to report higher acculturation and familiarity with supervisors and recognition. These findings suggest that, given certain circumstances, telecommuters show signs of being more assimilated on some dimensions than their collocated counterparts. Specifically, they report stronger acculturation, involvement, role negotiation and familiarity with supervisor and recognition. The implications of these findings for organizations, management and future research have been discussed.

In conclusion, this exploratory study focused on the dynamic interplay between socialization and the individual (telecommuter; Bullis, 1993). The OAI was very useful in studying the questions addressed in this thesis. This study contributed to the growing validity of the instrument. At the same time, it also raised questions about the dimensionality of the instrument, which should be further examined in future research.

This study has identified, with relative certainty, that telecommuters tend to be more assimilated than nontelecommuters on multiple dimensions. The way communication patterns and perceived benefits influenced assimilation has been described. The implications thereof have been discussed, and practical recommendations have been made for organizations. I conclude, as Mahfood (1992) wrote, there are no losers in telecommuting: all win—workers, employers, and society in general.

APPENDIX A

RECRUITING EMAIL

Dear Potential Participant,

I am sending you this email to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study about employees' work experiences. The study is being conducted by Tamara Zaman, a student at the University of Utah. This study will investigate employees' experience with socialization, or feeling of association with the workplace.

If you are over the age of 18 and employed for at least 20 hours a week, then you are ideal for this study! Your responses are also valuable if you work for more than one company. The survey is for both telecommuters (i.e- you work remotely at least twice a week) and non-telecommuters (i.e- you work in an office). Unfortunately, this study does not cover independent contractors with no affiliation to any specific organizations.

Please click on the link below if you wish to respond to a short questionnaire about your organization and employment.

https://humutah.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_dclnvWZhPJedfEN

If you can think of anyone else who might take this survey, I would be very grateful if you would forward this email to them. Feel free to send me an email at tamara.zaman@utah.edu for any questions about the research.

Thank you for considering participation in this research. Your responses are valuable to my research, and I appreciate your time!

Sincerely,
Tamara Zaman
Masters Candidate
Department of Communication
University of Utah

APPENDIX B

THE SURVEY

Q1: Dear Participant,

This study will investigate employees' experience with socialization, or feeling of association with the workplace. The study is being conducted by Tamara Zaman, a student at the University of Utah.

If you are over the age of 18 and employed for at least 20 hours a week, then you are ideal for this study! Your responses are also valuable if you work for more than one company. The survey is for both telecommuters (i.e- you work remotely at least twice a week) and non-telecommuters (i.e- you work in an office). Unfortunately, this study does not cover independent contractors with no affiliation to any specific organizations.

Please click on the "continue" button below if you wish to respond to a short 5 – 10 minute questionnaire about your organization and employment. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you can terminate the survey at any time. You can also skip any questions you choose not to answer. By clicking on "continue", you are giving your consent to participate.

If you can think of anyone else who might take this survey, I would be very grateful if you would forward the original email with the link to the survey to them. Feel free to send me an email at tamara.zaman@utah.edu for any questions about the research.

Thank you for considering participation in this research. Your responses are valuable to my research, and I appreciate your time!

Sincerely,
Tamara Zaman,
Masters Candidate
Department of Communication
University of Utah

[Continue]

Q2: Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey investigating how connected employees feel to their company. Please be assured that completion of the survey is voluntary, and all responses will be kept anonymous.
Please answer the following questions as completely and accurately as you can.
What is your age?

Q3: What is your gender?

Q4: How many organizations are you affiliated with at the moment?
If more than one, please choose the organization you work more hours for to respond to the remaining questions.

Q5: What is your job title or position?

Q6: How long have you been working in this position?

Q7: How many hours do you work per week?

Q8: Approximately how many of these hours do you work from home?
- None. My job requires me to go to the workplace regularly.
- I work a fixed number of hours from home:
- The number of hours varies, but on average is about:

Q9: Did you work on-site on this job before starting to work from home?

Q10: For how long?

Q11: Do you to go into the office at all?

Q12: How often? (eg: once a week, twice a month)

Q13: What is the primary purpose of this trip? (eg: meetings, team activity, training)

Q14: Why do you choose to work from home? (eg: personal preference, nature of job, convenience)

Q15: Are you a manager/supervisor?

Q16: How many people do you supervise?

Q17: What is your primary form of communication (eg: phone, email) with your supervisor?

Q18: What is your primary form of communication (eg: phone, email) with your coworkers?

Q19: How often (eg: once a day, twice a week, at least 5 times a day) do you communicate with your supervisor?

Q20: How often (eg: once a day, twice a week, at least 5 times a day) do you communicate with your coworkers?

Q21: Compared to other employees at your organization, which of the following statements is true about the benefits you receive?
- I have the same benefits as other employees
- My coworkers get more attractive benefits than I do
- I get more attractive benefits than my coworkers

Q22: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)
My supervisor and I talk together often
I feel comfortable talking to my coworkers
I feel like I know my supervisor pretty well
I volunteer for duties that benefit the organization
I understand the standards of the organization
I do this job a bit differently than my predecessor did
I think my supervisor recognizes my value to the organization
I think I have a good idea about how this organization operates
I talk about how much I enjoy my work
I consider my coworkers friends
My supervisor listens to my ideas
I have changed some aspects of my position
My supervisor sometimes discusses problems with me
I feel like I know my coworkers pretty well
I know the values of my organization
My supervisor recognizes when I do a good job
I often show others how to perform our work
I think I'm an expert at what I do
I talk to my coworkers about how much I like it here
I think my supervisor values my opinions
I have figured out efficient ways to do my work

I do not mind being asked to perform my work according to the organization's standards
I can do others' jobs, if I am needed
I have helped to change the duties of my position

APPENDIX C

HISTOGRAMS DEPICTING FREQUENCIES OF

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON THE SURVEY

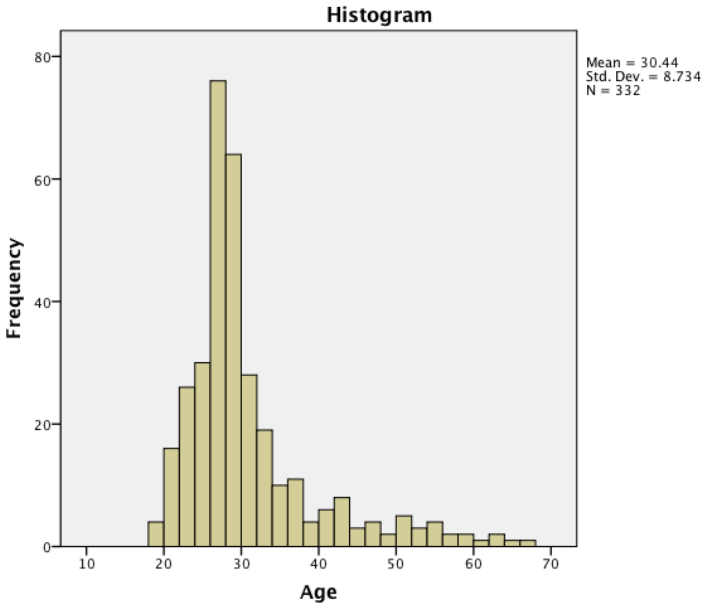

Figure 1: Participants' age

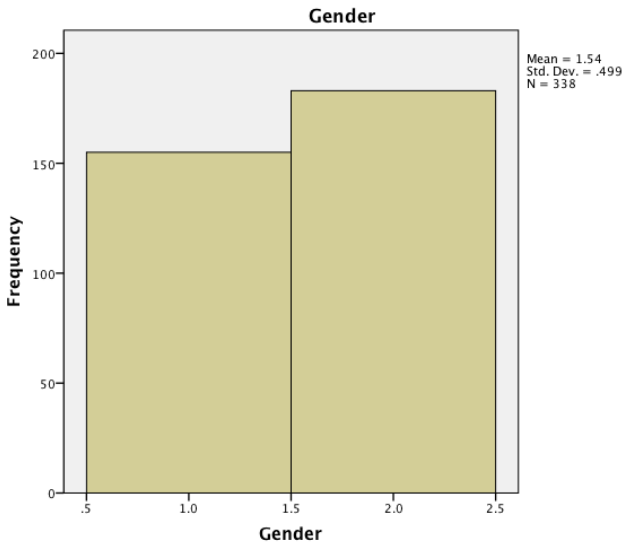

Figure 2: Participants' gender

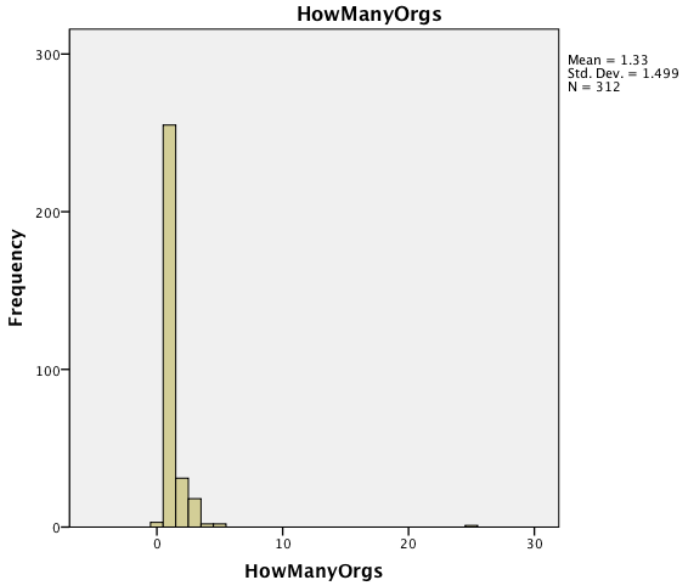

Figure 3: Number of organizations participants are affiliated with

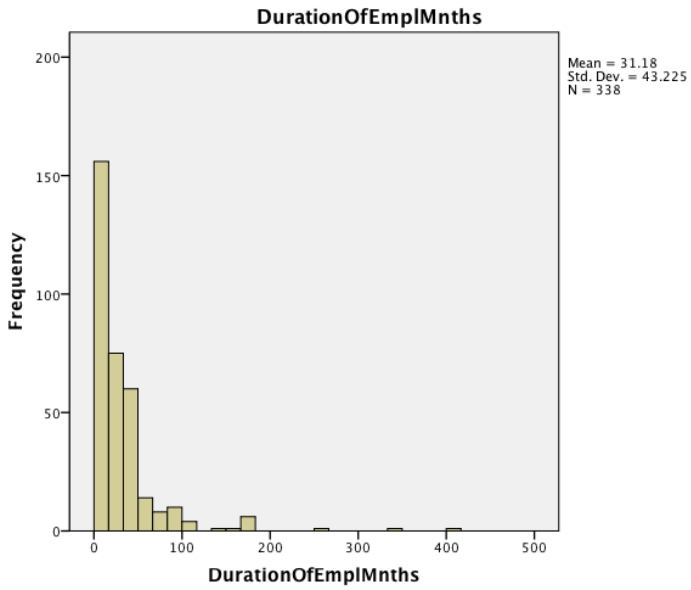

Figure 4: Participants' duration of employment in current position

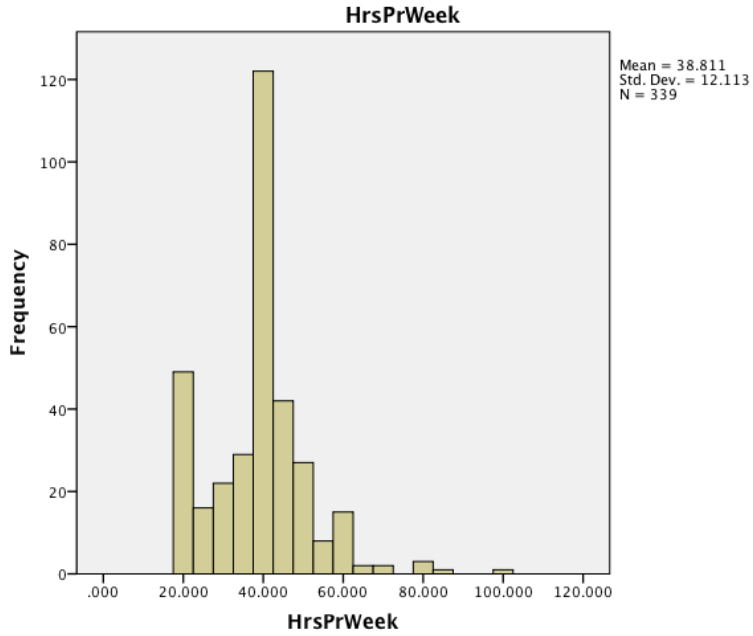

Figure 5: Number of hours participants work each week

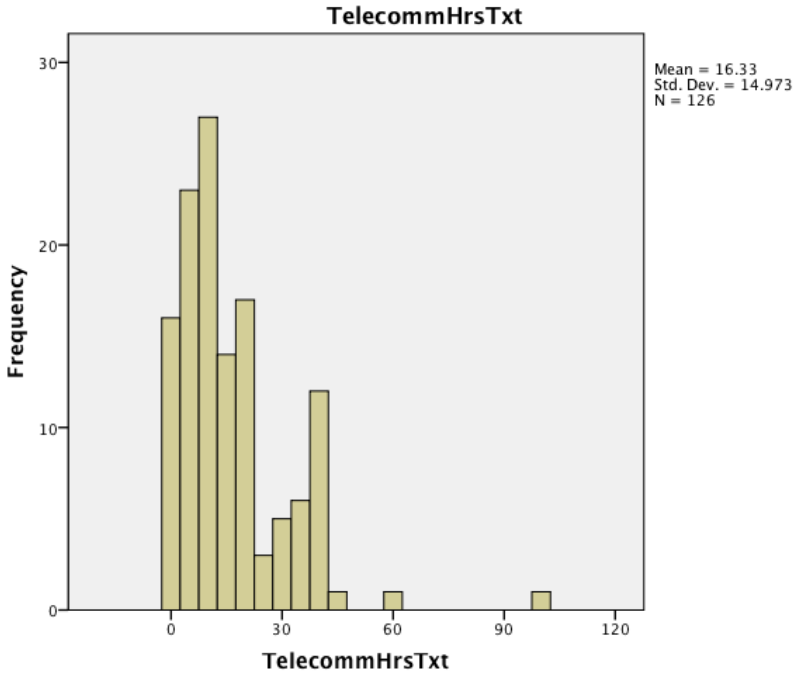

Figure 6: Number of hours participants work from home each week

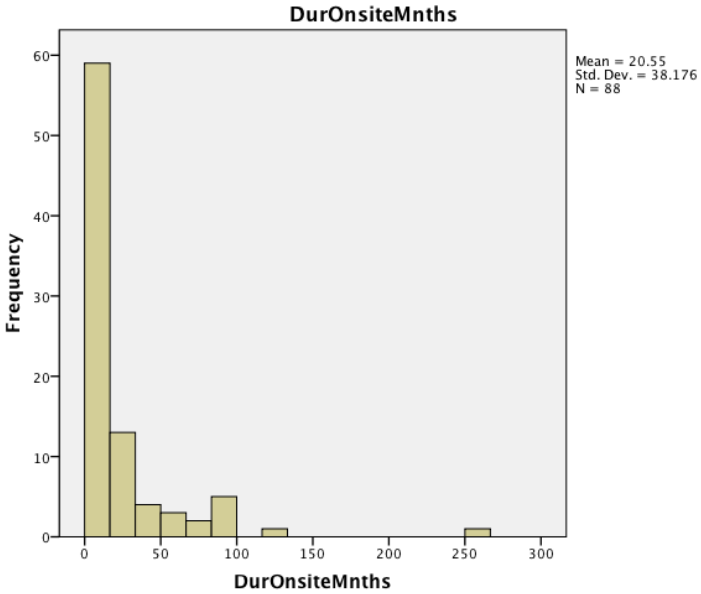

Figure 7: Number of months participants worked onsite before telecommuting

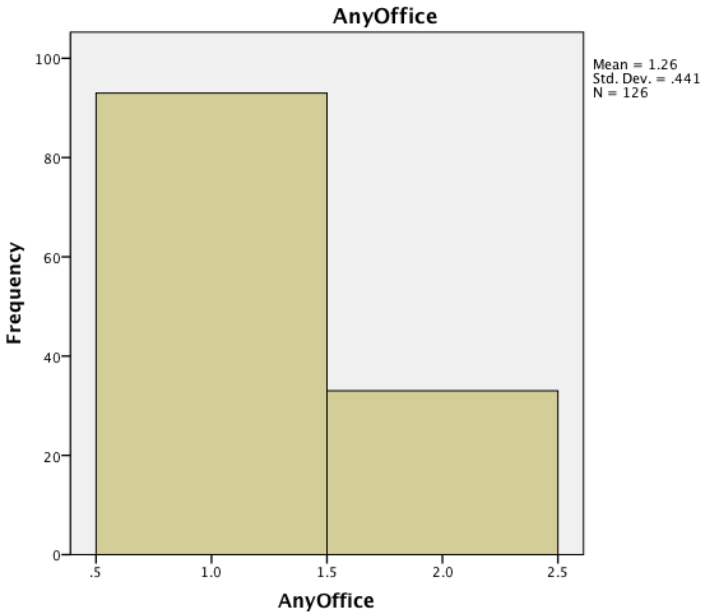

Figure 8: Indication of whether participants go into the workplace at all

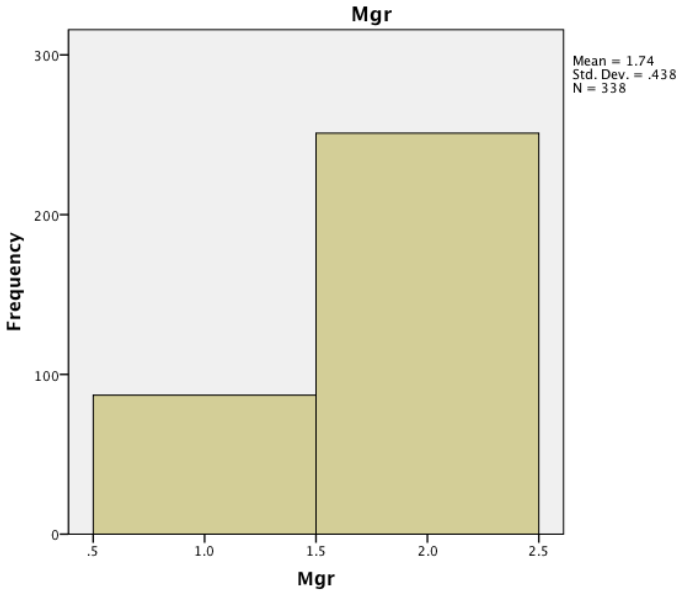

Figure 9: Indication of whether participants are managers or supervisors

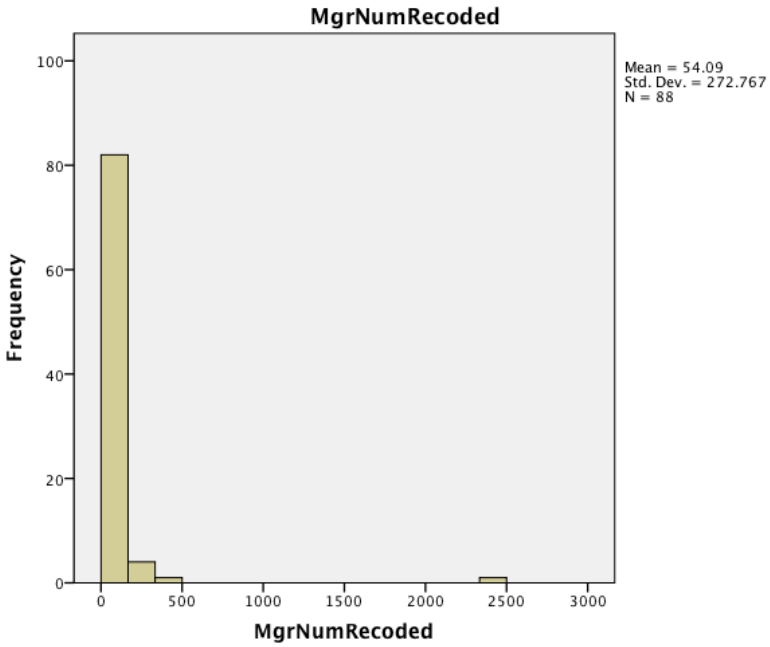

Figure 10: Size of teams managed

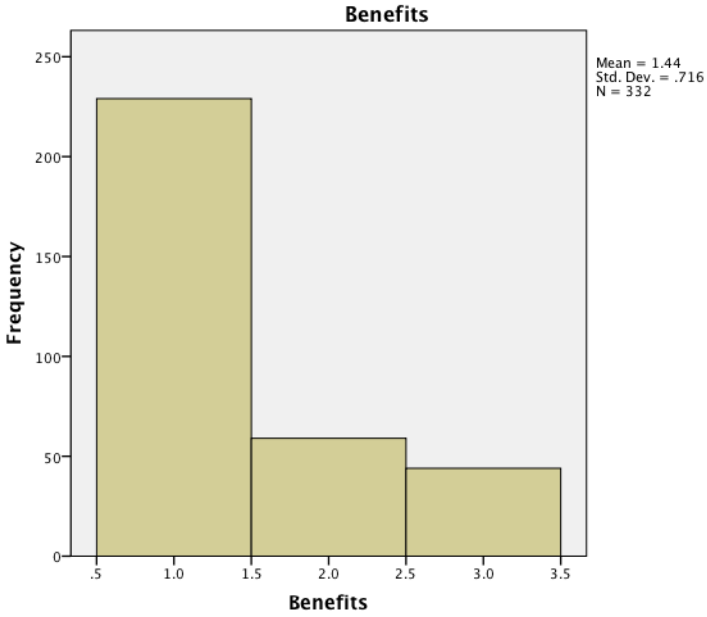

Figure 11: Participants' perceptions of their benefits

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